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Final Fantasy VII

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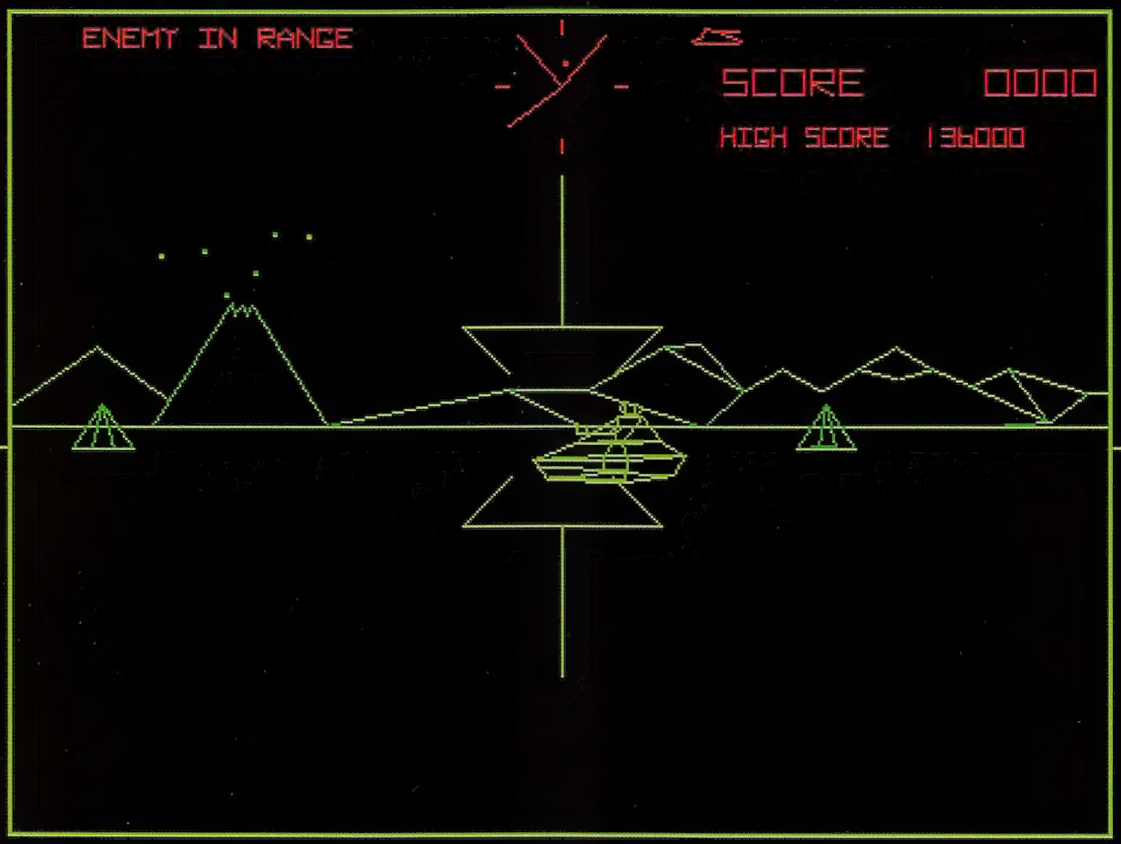
The Boundaries Between Action and Strategy Are Being Redrawn.



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— OGR

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— CGE Magazine

Rated "94%"
— Ultimate PC Magazine UK
(First Worldwide Review)

"Activision...is implementing what may be the best interface seen yet in a computer game."
— Next Generation Magazine

Product Information Number 87

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Dynamic First-Person Immersion
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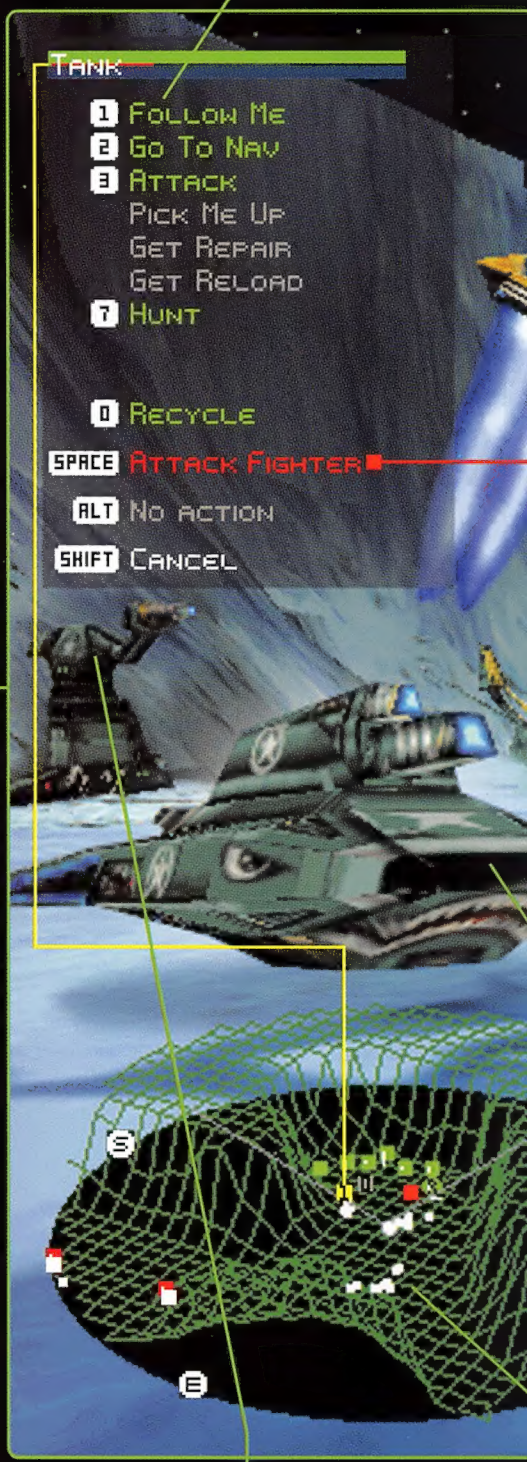
Command System:
An innovative menu system integrates troop and resource management for full control from within your anti-grav vehicle.



Gun Tower:
This devastating, long-range defensive unit is powered by the vulnerable Solar Array.

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Scrap/Pilot Meters:
Both are a resource. Gather Scrap for your unit-building Factories; build Barracks to add to your supply of pilots.

Solar Array:
The Solar Array provides power to your Factories, Gun Towers and other energy-intensive units.

Scavenger:
Send your Scavenger to collect valuable Scrap. Gather from scrapfields or destroyed units on the battlefield.

Nav Beacon Camera:
Set up way-point navigation beacons along the battlezone to stage attacks or for surveillance purposes.

Actual Screenshot.

D Radar:
topographical
D radar displays
our base location,
nit placement,
eld of vision and
nemy position.

Grizzly Tank:
Configure a Grizzly, the key American tank, right on the battlefield.

Weaponry:
Spend resources to reconfigure your vehicle's weaponry on-the-fly in the midst of battle.

Multiplayer:
Wage multiplayer battles in full Strategy mode over LAN, modem or Internet, or up to eight-player battles in Deathmatch mode.

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PC GAMER

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 4 • APRIL 1998

Cover Story

Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun

Westwood Studios' long-awaited sequel to the blockbuster *Command & Conquer* is *the* most hotly anticipated game of 1998, and guess what? We've got the exclusive first preview and screenshots of this classic-in-the-making.

62

Countdown to Destruction

DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!

Introducting the PC Gamer Sports Network! In our inaugural broadcast, the PCGSN team brings you all the latest dirt on the hot baseball titles that will be vying for "King of the Diamond" in 1998.

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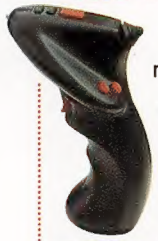
Hardware

161 **The Hard Stuff**



Lockheed Martin, a jet manufacturer, getting into the home PC market? Yes, this and other stories from the "strange but true" file (as well as our usual round up of hardware recommendations) are coming to you this month.

Scoops

Extreme Warfare 30

Trying to prove that there's life after *The 11th Hour*, Trilobyte's new action game is looking good.

Forsaken 36

If you liked *Descent*, Probe Entertainment is confident you'll love *Forsaken*, its first attempt at a 3D shooter.

Final Fantasy VII 40

FFVII is one of the best selling titles ever on the PlayStation, and SquareSoft hopes to surpass its success with an improved PC version.

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So many good demos you'll be beggin' us to take some back. But we won't. Ha! Ha! Ha!

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44 Eyewitness
This month's news is headed up by news of 1997's biggest-selling games, and the results of the the *PC Gamer* Gamer's Choice Awards. Hip hip, hooray!

182 Extended Play **T. Liam McDonald**
Tom fills us in on some of the lowlights in the add-on market, and rails about the lack of foresight that some developers display when it comes to including 3D support out of the box.

185 Multi-Play **Jason Bates**
Jason extols the virtues of *VGA Planets* and how e-mail play in general is the way to go for playing turn-based strategy games over the Internet.

186 The Threshold **Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"**
With his American flag proudly waving, Thresh defends the rights of campers everywhere... it doesn't mean he approves of their tactics, though.

188 Alternate Lives **Michael Wolf**
The apologies are flying as Mike clears up an error he made regarding *Fallout* and the GURPS license, and takes a second look at *Ultima Online* (for which he makes no apology).

191 The Desktop General **William R. Trotter**
Bill has a chat with Gary Grigsby and Keith Brors (co-designers of the Steel Panthers series) and gets their take on why they left SSI for TalonSoft.

194 Sim Column **Dan Bennett**
Dan always thought of himself as a Sim-head...until he met the guys who make up Delta Hawks, who make him (and to be fair, just about everyone else) look like a rank amateur.

198 Strategy Central
Here you'll find complete walkthroughs for *Blade Runner* and *The Curse of Monkey Island*, part two of our *Uprising* strategy, and some hints and tips to help you conquer *Seven Kingdoms*, while Readers' Requests doles out our monthly award for Tip of the Month.

233 Letters
Want to see your name in print? Then get going and write us some letters!

240 Next Issue
LucasArts is one of the most popular names in PC gaming, and we have the inside scoop on what you'll be seeing next from them.

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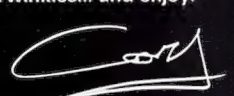
We came, we saw, we Command & Conquered... again

Yes, that's me up there, all dressed up and no-one to shoot. One of the more surprising aspects of this month's PC Gamer trip to Westwood Studios to check out the development of *Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun* and bring you the exclusive first-look, was our visit to the huge green-screen sound stage where Westwood films its cinematic cut scenes. It was here, during our routine visit, that Westwood's Joe Kucan (who *C&C* fans will know better as the Brotherhood of NOD's despotic leader Kane) insisted that I lend a hand with a costume and lighting test by donning the uniform of a GDI marine commando and going through some combat moves. An hour later I was sweating my cajones off inside the state-of-the-art battlesuit, but don't go looking for me when you play the game this holiday season – something tells me my lumbering performance won't make the cut.

So, once you've stopped giggling at the picture above, I trust your next stop will be page 62, where our world exclusive preview of this stunning-looking sequel to *Command & Conquer* kicks off. Once again we've scooped the competition to bring you the first ever look at one of the year's most hotly anticipated games, so sit back, open up a box of Tiberium Twinkies... and enjoy.



Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

"The future of gaming." PC Gamer ☑ a completely *original* 3D engine ☑ ruthless AI ☑ hyper-realistic environmental effects

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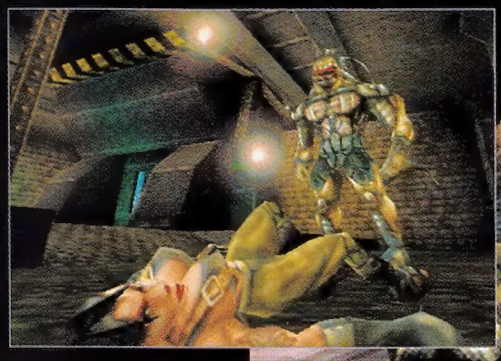

Actual gameplay screen shots

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WINDOWS 95 CD-ROM

Digital Extremes

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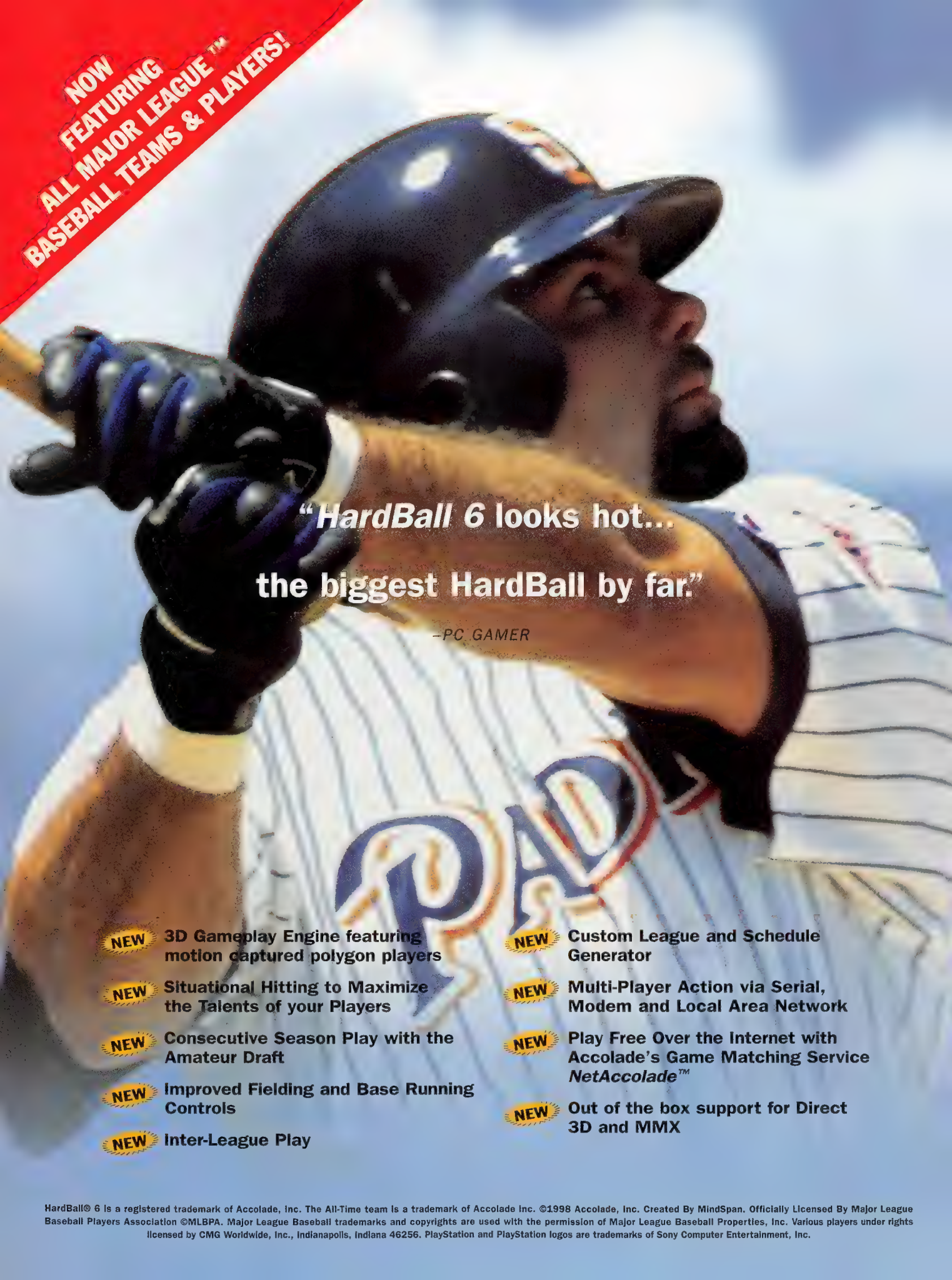
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Classic HardBall gameplay– face the heat of a 90 mph fastball, blast the game-winning homer, sweat the details. It doesn't get any better than this!

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Product Information Number 84

Our Monkey's on the Moon!

We have just learned that Coconut Monkey has appeared, alive and well, on the surface of the moon. Dan was still on his trail, taking every possible step to reclaim his five dollars. Unfortunately (for Dan, anyway), CM was lying in wait and pummeled him before taking off for the moon in an obvious and touching homage to this month's exclusive feature demo, *Battlezone*. Mr. Whitta dispatched William and the mysterious Associate Art Director known only as Q to bring CM in, but CM brought out the big guns to stop them cold — another box of game demos. This proved to be the undoing of *PC Gamer's* top agents, as both Q and William have lapsed into a near-vegetative state after playing *Dark Omen*, *Links LS 98*, and every other fantastic demo on this month's disc. Both are currently in therapy, but these things take time. In the meantime, see what all the fuss is about, and keep your eyes open for CM; he's insane with power!

You can go straight to the demos, the main menu, or click the Start Here button for the intro.

Entering Paradise

Your exploration begins with a panoramic view of Coconut Monkey's Island. You can move the mouse around the screen to scroll left or right. When your mouse scrolls over an area that contains information, it will turn into an arrow. Just click on the highlighted site to enter.

There are control buttons on the bottom of the screen that will take you to any of the sites. Click on the control buttons to enter and exit each site.

Quick Start for The CD

1. Insert the CD.
2. From the Windows RUN option, type X:START31.EXE or X:START95.EXE, depending on your version of Windows (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will run *The CD*.

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

REVIEWS INDEX

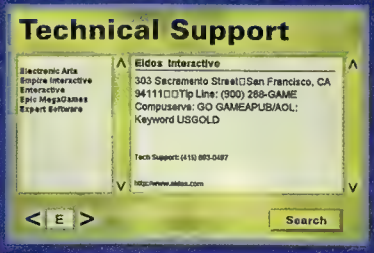
The Reviews Index contains info on every review we've ever run, including the Highs, Lows, and Bottom Line. The arrows will scroll through the index, and there's a search button to help you find any review by title.

PATCHES

The Patches & Updates section shows a description and location for each of the patches on *The CD*, as well as all of the add-on levels we've included for *Quake*, *WarCraft II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Doom II*.

TECH SUPPORT

Our Technical Support database includes contact information for many game companies. The arrows will let you scroll through the selections, plus there's a search button so you can find any company by name.

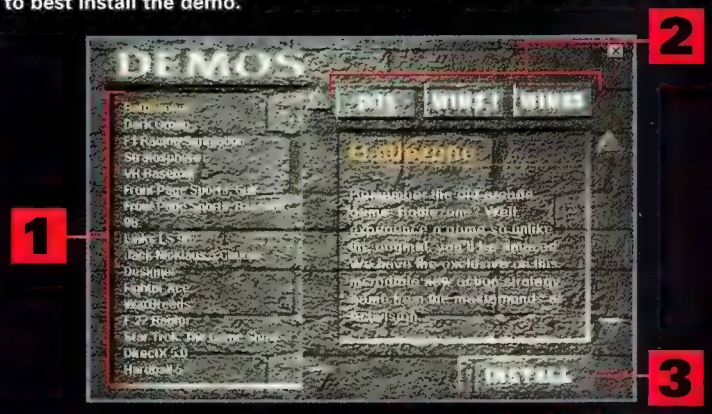


INTERNET

At the Internet Hut, you can install any of the online services on *The CD*. You can also select your web browser to connect to the Internet — very handy for getting online info if you have problems with a demo.

PLAYING THE DEMOS

This is where you go to install the many demos on *The CD*. When you first enter this screen, a list of all the demos will appear in the left column. 1 Click on the DOS, WIN 3.1, and WIN 95 buttons. 2 This will break the demos down into their respective categories. The INSTALL button 3 will allow you to install a demo and, if applicable, connect to that company's web site (you'll have to first select your browser from the Internet Hut). Occasionally, some of these demos won't install from our front end. In these cases, a message will appear instructing you on how to best install the demo.



System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

NOTE: These requirements are for loading our front-end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Attention Win95 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end should work fine in Windows. To install and run DOS games, you will need to reboot into a DOS session.

Free Demos!

Newsstand buyers have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s World Wide Web site at *www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and daily gaming news.

2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 468-2500 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only $7.95 shipping and handling.

Disc Editors' Note

For the latest news and updates, please be sure to read the PCG-READ.TXT file located in the root of The CD. You will find tips on how to run some demos and information on how to get support for any problems you encounter on *The CD*. Also, keep an eye on the ad banner at the Main Menu on the front end. This month you'll see a non-interactive demo of ASC Games' *Sanitarium*, which has a clue for solving the first puzzle in the game!

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the right directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter.

For example, to install the *Battlezone* demo, at the DOS Prompt, type "CD\x" where X is the name of your CD drive. Then type "CD\BZONE". Then type "SETUP.EXE"and press Enter. The demo of *Battlezone* will then be installed on your computer. If you're running Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, you can instead use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command for a Windows-based demo.

*Indicates that the demo requires DirectX to run. Install DirectX by running DXSETUP.EXE in the \DIRECTX directory on *The CD*.

Demo	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
Battlezone*	\BZONE	SETUP.EXE	10	WIN95
Dark Omen*	\DARKOMEN	SETUP.EXE	13	WIN95
WarBreeds*	\WARBREED	SETUP.EXE	14	WIN95
F-22 Raptor	\F22RAPT	F-22Raptor6.exe	14	WIN95
F1 Racing Simulation*	\F1RACING	F1_D3DV5.EXE	15	WIN95
Stratosphere	\STRAT	SETUP.EXE	15	WIN95
VR Baseball*	\VRBASEB	VRBBDEMO.EXE	19	WIN95
FPS: Golf*	\FPSGOLF	SETUP.EXE	19	WIN95
FPS: Baseball 98	\FPSBB98	BB98DML.EXE	20	WIN95
Links LS 98*	\LINKS989	LS98DEMO.EXE	20	WIN95
Jack Nicklaus 5: Course Designer*	\JN5	JN5DEMOD.EXE	21	WIN95
HardBall 5	\HB5DEMO	HB5DEMO.EXE	21	DOS
Star Trek: The Game Show	\STARTREK	INSTALL.EXE	24	WIN95
Game Add-Ons	—	—	24	WIN95
Microsoft Fighter Ace	\ACE	FASETUP.EXE	25	WIN95
EarthLink	\EARTHL\14DAY\TA 3DAY\TA	SETUP.EXE	25	WIN95
MindSpring	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	25	Win3.1
Patches	\PATCHES	—	352	
DirectX 5.0				Win95

Battlezone

Win95

Company: Activision
Tech Support: (310) 255-2050
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; DirectX; SVGA
Install: BZONE\SETUP.EXE

What's this? Another hot game demo exclusive to *PC Gamer*? That's right, folks — it's the ultra-hot *Battlezone*, and the expanded CD-only demo is only on *our* CD! Who loves ya, baby?

In the late 1950s, the United States and the USSR discovered superior alien technology that allowed the construction of space-age war machines. So while the world focused its attention on the Apollo missions, a more important space race was shaping up, with both sides hoping to gain control of that alien technology. Thus begins *Battlezone*, the highly anticipated game from Activision.

Battlezone is a blend of real-time strategy and first-person action; to successfully complete the missions, you must battle it out either on foot or in a vehicle (you can enter and leave vehicles at will), constructing bases and base defenses along the way. If you want to succeed, you'll have to be able to do several things at once, including defending your own butt from Soviet lasers.

The demo lets you play as the Stars and Stripes (the U.S. forces) in two missions; you can also battle it out in four combat exercises. To configure the game options (such as audio and video), click on the Options tab at the bottom of the screen. Once done, click on single-player, then on the American flag. This will take you to your first mission.

The radar in the lower left-hand corner shows where everything is in relation to you. Be sure to keep an eye on it so the enemy doesn't sneak up on you.

CONTROL KEYS

Slow Forward	Q	Jump	E
Forward	W	Target Enemy Off/On	T
Strafe Left	A	Turn off Nav Beacon	T
Stop and Back	S	Select Next Nav Beacon	N
Strafe Right	D	Get Information on Object	I
Pitch Up	F + MOUSE DOWN	Hop out of Vehicle	H
Pitch Down	C + MOUSE UP	Bail Out of Vehicle	Ctrl + B
Turn Left	MOUSE LEFT	Deploy/Undeploy Vehicle	L
Turn Right	MOUSE RIGHT	Exit Mission	alt + X

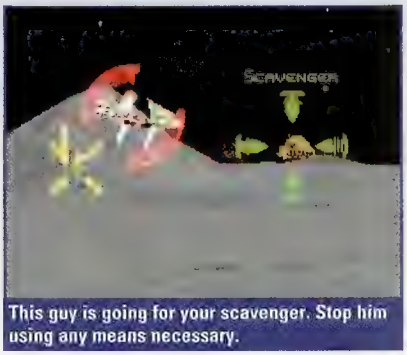
Each mission begins with a short briefing that explains your goals. After you've committed the briefing to memory, step out onto the moon. The first thing you'll want to do is get inside a vehicle. There'll be four vehicles lined up — pick one that looks nifty and walk into it (you'll automatically enter it). Use the cursor keys to move the vehicle around and the mouse to aim and fire your weapon; to change weapons, right-click with the mouse. All the weapons fire with a left-click on the mouse, but some of them need to charge for a moment between shots. Practice a bit to get used to them.

A menu bar on the left-hand side of the screen shows various communication options. To communicate with another vehicle, press its corresponding number on the keyboard. This brings up a sub-menu that lets you order that vehicle to move, go to a beacon, or build something. In the first mission, you need to build a scavenger, so select that option. A few moments later, a scavenger will appear, and you'll have to protect it. Be sure to follow the onscreen and verbal commands; they'll tell you how the mission's going.

The second mission is much more complex and involves creating base defenses while under attack from Soviet forces. They'll try to lure you away from your base, but don't fall for it — just stand your ground and pick them off as they appear.

Now get out there and defend America's chunk of space!

And here we thought the moon was just good for jumping around and cool looking rocks. Shoot, man, shoot!



This guy is going for your scavenger. Stop him using any means necessary.

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BETWEEN TWO WORLDS,
ONE DEAD,
THE OTHER POWERLESS
TO BE BORN."
THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE
SANITARIUM
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OUT OF THE VOID,
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AND STRUGGLE
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KESMAI STUDIOS

You can either deploy your forces manually or let the game auto-deploy them by clicking this button.

Dark Omen

Company: Electronic Arts
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Category: Strategy
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; DirectX
Install: DARKOMEN\SETUP.EXE

What is it with the undead? Always running around, trying to kill everyone.... Being dead must be awfully boring — nearly every month, hordes of dead guys show up with nothing better to do than sever limbs and eat brains. Well, with Electronic Arts' *Dark Omen*, you have the chance to fight back. *Dark Omen* is a 3D strategy game based on the popular Warhammer fantasy battle system.

The demo allows lets you play one mission (the full version has 30) as Commander Bernhardt, leader of the infamous Grudgebringer mercenary army. The town of Bogenhafen is under attack, and you're their only hope, because the forces of evil are closing in fast.

When you start the demo, you'll be welcomed by three hardened soldiers with some tips to offer. Listen to their spiel, then click on the arrow pointing to the right. This will take you to the town of Bogenhafen. Before the bloodbath begins, you'll be given the chance to organize your units. A box will appear on the left-hand side of the screen, showing the units available to you. Select a unit's flag with the mouse and drag the flag where you wish to place the unit (you've got to stay behind the white flags, though.) When you're satisfied, click the arrow toward the top of the screen.

The enemy doesn't waste any time, so be ready. To have one of your units join the battle, click on its flag and move your mouse away from the unit — the blue flag shows where the unit will move. If you place the cursor over an enemy unit, the cursor will change to a sword; then you just click, and your boys will attack. The arrow keys on your keyboard let you move your viewpoint to get the best angle on the action.

Be sure to keep track of what types of units you have and what kinds of weapons they employ. Some are short-range fighters that need to engage the enemy hand-to-hand, while others are long-range fighters that will be butchered if the enemy gets too close to them. Base your strategy on the strengths of your troops, and you may have a chance.

In the lower right-hand corner of the screen is a menu. Move your mouse over the various icons, and you'll be told what each button does. Select the magic button and a new icon (or icons) will appear to its left. Click the power you want to use and the unit you wish to attack. Some of the magic weapons,such as fireballs, need to be fired in front of an oncoming unit, so take that into consideration. Also keep in mind that you may do damage to your own units; of course, if you're being over-run, that'll be the price they'll have to pay. The timer in the middle of the menu shows how long that power takes to recharge.

Your men are brave, but they will run if overwhelmed. If this happens, you lose control over them. Wait for them to get clear and regroup, and they'll be more than happy to take another crack at butchering the undead for you. The demo ends when one side emerges victorious. Maybe it'll be you....

Look at the dead wandering around. Too bad for you they're organized. Have fun dying!

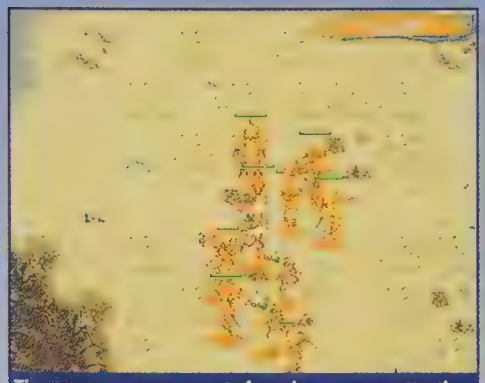
See that evil guy there? When his ugly mug shows up, it's a pretty good indication that his buddies aren't far behind.

WarBreeds

Win95

Company: Red Orb Entertainment
Tech Support: (415) 382-4777
Category: Strategy
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 23MB hard-drive space; DirectX; SVGA; mouse
Install: WARBREED\SETUP.EXE

WarBreeds is a real-time strategy game in which you play as one of four alien races, fighting for supremacy on a distant planet. The game offers a new twist on the old formula by letting you conduct genetic research to create and build new units — and you can't just harvest energy out of the blue; you have to plant pods first.



The enemy can appear out of nowhere, so pay attention.

To direct your forces, highlight them and send them on their way.

Like most real-time strategy games, *WarBreeds* is controlled with the mouse. Select your units with a click, and you can either move them, make them attack an enemy, or build a new structure.

The demo lets you play three training missions. At the beginning of the game, choose Campaign, Basic Training, then one of three options: you can try your hand at a practice battle, base-building, or genetic research. The objectives for all three are given when you start, and you'll get some help along the way.

During the building mission, you begin by using a Shaman to plant either a seed or pod in the fertile crop land. Once grown, the plants provide power for new structures you can build, like the refinery and PSI-tower. Simply continue until you have met the mission objectives.

If you enjoy the demo, the full version will feature many more missions, as well as cooperative multi-player that will allow you to share resources. Now get out there and kick some buttocks!

CONTROL KEYS

Toggle Main Menu	esc
Fast Scroll/Add Units	Shift
Keep Selected Units in Formation	Spacebar
Auto-target Closest Enemy	A
Zoom In/Out	Z
Select All	E
Issue Stop Command	S
Select Next Friendly Creature	N
Toggle Follow Lock Mode	L
Toggle Power Zone Viewing	O
Center on Current Selection	home

F-22 Raptor

Win95

Company: NovaLogic
Tech Support: (818) 878-0325
Category: Simulation
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: F22RAPT\F-22Raptor6.exe

The African nation of Angola is in chaos, with the Angolan People's Liberation Movement leading the way. As tensions between the APLA and the United Nations mount, a no-fly zone is established. In the *F-22 Raptor* demo, you're a U.S. pilot who must help prevent unauthorized aircraft from entering that zone. And guess what — you can use any means at your disposal!

Keep an eye on the radar screen to the right — those red blips aren't Christmas lights.

You've got a lock on the bandit, so pull the trigger and let the missiles fly!

The beginning of the mission finds you sitting on the runway in your F-22, with clearance to take off and bandits closing in fast. To start your engines, press the Backspace key. You'll begin to move down the runway; once you reach about 150 knots, press the down arrow (or pull back on the joystick if you're using one) and you'll take off. Once you're clear, press the G key to raise your gear — this will transition the plane from landing mode to attack mode. Finally, you'll want to press 0 on the keyboard, which will adjust your thrust to 100 percent.

To engage the enemy, follow the waypoint caret (the arrow on your Heads-Up Display) and soon you'll be doing some serious air-to-air combat. The HUD will target incoming aircraft with a red box appearing around the closest enemy. You'll be given clearance to fire — be sure to take the bad guys out quickly because they'll be all over you if you miss.

The full version of the game offers more missions, as well as the option to play over the Internet via NovaWorld, which will pit you against others in team and free-for-all combat situations.

F1 Racing Simulation

Company: Ubi Soft
Tech Support: *www.ubisoft.com/support_index.html*
Category: Simulation
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 3Dfx or D3D video card; DirectX
Install: F1RACING\F1_D3DV5.EXE

The kids love the racing games, and Ubi Soft responds to that love with *F1 Racing Simulation*. This demo lets you run one race in beautiful Italy, but don't take too much time to stop and smell the vino; this is a true racing sim, and the other drivers will turn you into roadkill.

The demo runs directly off the CD; just go to the F1RACING folder and double-click the F1 icon to start. This will take you to an information screen; move the checkered flag to the "Okay" button and click. What follows are a series of menus; you can't mess with them in the demo, but they'll give you a picture of the options included in the full version. After the last menu, the race begins.

Control is pretty straightforward: by default, Button 1 on your joystick or gamepad is the accelerator, and Button 2 is the brake. Don't keep your foot in the gas; since the demo only plays in realistic mode, you can't just floor it and expect to win. You've got to judge those turns and adjust your speed accordingly; one wrong move, and you'll spin out of control (watch for signs posted on some turns that advise you of the correct speed). You'll have to drive a bit conservatively, but the race is only five laps long — so if you see an opportunity to gain position, take it.

The full version of *F1 Racing Simulation* lets you race in one of 22 different Formula One cars through 16 1996 World Championship tracks.

SPECIAL NOTE: This demo requires a 3D accelerator card, either 3Dfx or Direct3D compatible. Also, the CD must be in your drive for the demo to run.

Please keep off the grass. Marcello just mowed it.

CONTROL KEYS

Game Play Options	ESC
Options	F1
Play Views	F2
Realistic View	F3
Different Views of Each Car	F4
Current Grading	F5
Pause	P

Stratosphere

Win95

Company: Kodiak Interactive
Tech Support: stratosphere@sculptured.com
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; mouse
Install: \STRAT\SETUP.EXE

Take to the skies in a flying fortress with Kodiak Interactive's *Stratosphere*. The demo lets you take command of one of these spiffy-looking ships (which use Float Stones to get off the ground, naturally) and engage in a friendly round of all-out war with some folks who want to wreak havoc on the Valley Kingdom you're defending.

The demo lets you fly a couple of missions and use the editor to create and modify ships. During the course of gameplay, you must patrol and take out any enemies who come too close. To engage an enemy, wait until it enters the green area in front of your ship (this area defines where your weapons will fire) and aim with the mouse. Some weapons take longer to fire, so try to lead your target as much as possible. The Build option lets you customize your ship when the action slows down; you can add more weapons or other goodies like walls and thrusters. Don't linger too long in the Build mode, though — the enemy can still attack and you'll be vulnerable.

If you take damage, you'll need to repair your flying fortress. Do this by pressing the R button — but be warned; this process takes time. Keep an eye on the integrity of your ship, and don't wait until you're almost dead before conducting repairs. You may also lose your weapons, but that doesn't mean you're helpless. If all else fails, you can always ram the bad guys.

The full version contains many more missions in varied environments and allows full use of the fortress editor.

Ha, ha! Look at the pretty flames. Hope the people on that ship brought their parachutes.

CONTROL KEYS

Forward Thrust	↑
Reverse Thrust	↓
Left Thrust	←
Right Thrust	→
Repair	R
Zoom Camera In	Home
Zoom Camera Out	End
Raise Camera	Page Up
Lower Camera	Page Down
Toggle Build Mode Off/On	B
Increase World Diplay Window	+
Decrease World Display Window	-
Restarts Mission	F5

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Product Information Number 360

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Available for Windows® 95 and Mac™ OS

Product Information Number 104

BUNGIE bungie.net

* Access to bungie.net is FREE. Player is responsible for applicable Internet fees.

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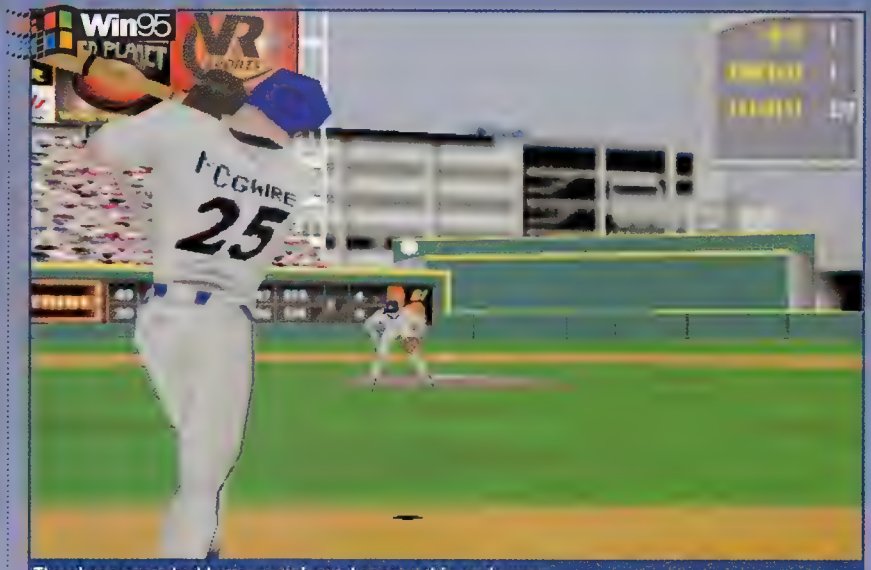
VR Baseball

Company: VR Sports
Tech Support: (714) 553-6678
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 15MB HD space; DirectX; 3D-accelerated video card
Install: \VRBASEB\VRBBDEMO.EXE

Spring is in the air, and that means America's favorite pastime is right around the corner. Spring training is going on, and everyone's gearing up for the first pitch of the 1998 campaign — but with VR Sports' *VR Baseball*, you'll have a little taste of the fun right now.

VR Baseball makes good use of its 3D engine; you can almost smell the fresh cut grass.



The cheap seats had better watch out, because this one's gone.

The demo lets you take part in a Home Run Derby, competing as one of ten players (five from the American League and five from the National). Take your pick from the likes of Ken Griffey Jr., Jim Thome, and Mark McGwire and slug it out at Jacobs Field in Cleveland for fame, fortune, and bragging rights.

In true derby fashion, you get ten outs, and any strike, foul, or hit that stays inside the park all count as an out. You swing by pressing a button on your gamepad or joystick (it doesn't matter which one), or by using the Ctrl key on the keyboard. The demo shows a running total of outs and homeruns, as well as who is currently the distance leader.

Be sure to make the most of your swings, or else you'll be riding pine for the rest of the afternoon.

Front Page Sports: Golf

Win95

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 38MB hard-drive space; DirectX; mouse
Install: \FPSGOLF\SETUP.EXE

So you had dreams of being the next Tiger Woods, but you found out you couldn't hit a ball straight if your life depended on it? No worries — the fine folks at Sierra have the next best thing: *Front Page Sports: Golf*. This demo will let you strut your stuff without anyone bugging you about playing through.

The demo lets you play three holes at the beautiful Pete Dye Golf Club located in the hills of West Virginia. In a nice change of pace, you play holes 6, 7, and 8, all while enjoying the splendor of the Appalachians.

The demo offers you the choice of playing by using the traditional three-click method (where you determine the accuracy of your shot by left-clicking the mouse on a series of bars) and the new TrueSwing, which lets you take your shot by pulling back the mouse, then pushing it forward. How hard you strike the ball is decided by how far back you pull the club, and moving it to the left or right results in a hook or slice. *FPS: Golf* has probably the best mouse-swing interface; it's adjustable, so you can customize it to work the way you need it to.

Like many Sierra games, *FPS: Golf* doesn't quite understand DirectX; before you run, you'll need to adjust your Windows 95 color settings to High Color. If you have it set for anything else, you will get an error message. (To check or change your settings, right-click on the desktop, click Properties, then click the Settings tab. The color settings will appear on the left.)

FPS: Golf utilizes TrueSwing technology, so that distance and direction are determined by how you move the mouse.

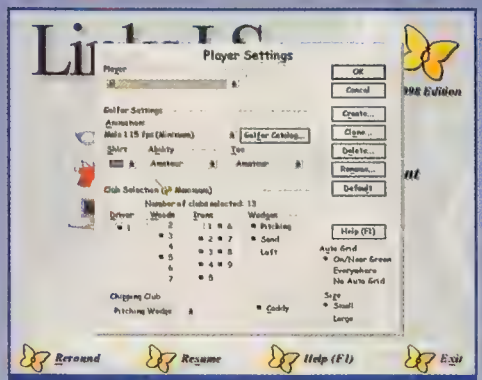
Four over par? Boy, that stinks. We hope you kept your day job. You need to eat, you know.

Links LS 98

Win95

Company: Access
Tech Support: (800) 793-8324
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 42MB hard-drive space; DirectX; SVGA; mouse
Install: \LINKS989\LS98DEMO.EXE

Links LS 98 is the latest in Access' extremely popular golf series. The demo lets you play nine holes at the lovely Kapalua Bay golf course in Hawaii. Whether you like Stroke play, Best Ball, or Skins, this game has something for everyone.



You can configure nearly every feature of your player right down to his shirt color.

The demo includes several of the features of the full version, so the best way to get the scoop on everything is to simply explore the demo. You'll probably want to set up your player first, so click on the Players button. Here, you'll be able to configure the types of clubs you carry, the difficulty level, and lots of other options. Once you're happy, click on Back and then on Play. You'll be presented with several choices, but you may want to take a stroll on the Practice course first. Before you tee off, take a look at the wind and the lay of the green. The game will, by default, give you the club it thinks you need. Move the cursor down to the bottom of the screen, and a menu will appear. Here you can change your clubs, alter your stance, and decide which way you want to hit the ball.

To take that first swing, place the mouse cursor on the swing meter. Click the left mouse button and hold it down to determine how hard you'll hit the ball. Let up, and the meter will swing the other way. Press it again as close to the lower line as possible to get that straight shot (or just a bit on either side if you want to hook or slice). Once you make it to the green, pay attention to the grid — it'll help you see if you're putting uphill or downhill and if the green breaks left or right. Be sure to adjust accordingly.

Naturally, the full version contains all these goodies, plus a lot more.

One reason for the popularity of the *Links* series is its exceptional graphics. You can almost hear the birds (actually, if you *can't* hear the birds, your speakers aren't working).

Front Page Sports: Baseball 98

Win95

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16 MB RAM; 20 MB free hard-drive space; 640x480 256 color video mode; DirectX; mouse
Install: \FBSBB98\BB98DML.EXE

Take to the diamond in Sierra's *Front Page Sports: Baseball 98*, the latest in Sierra's baseball line. Featuring a multitude of options, this demo lets you play three innings of major league ball.

Getting to the action is easy. Just make your choice and get ready for the big time.

Look at that catch! That's the difference between the minors and the majors.

You have your choice of two different modes of play, as well as taking a bit of batting practice. The Arcade option is the easier mode and features auto-fielding. To start in Arcade mode, click the Arcade button, select the teams, press Start, and select your controller. In the upper left-hand corner, a box will appear; choose how you want to bat and pitch by pressing the controller in the direction that matches the arrow, then press button one. Press the button again to either pitch or swing.

In Exhibition mode, the game can be as realistic as you want it. You choose your teams the same way, and after hitting Start you'll be brought to the control screen — this time, however, there's a difficulty setting. You can adjust it so that the computer does all the work for you, or none at all.

If you're a bit rusty at the plate, try out batting practice. It lets you choose the stadium, pitcher, and batter. A few rounds of practice should improve your batting average.

The full version contains loads of options, including season play and more stats than you can shake a big ash stick at.

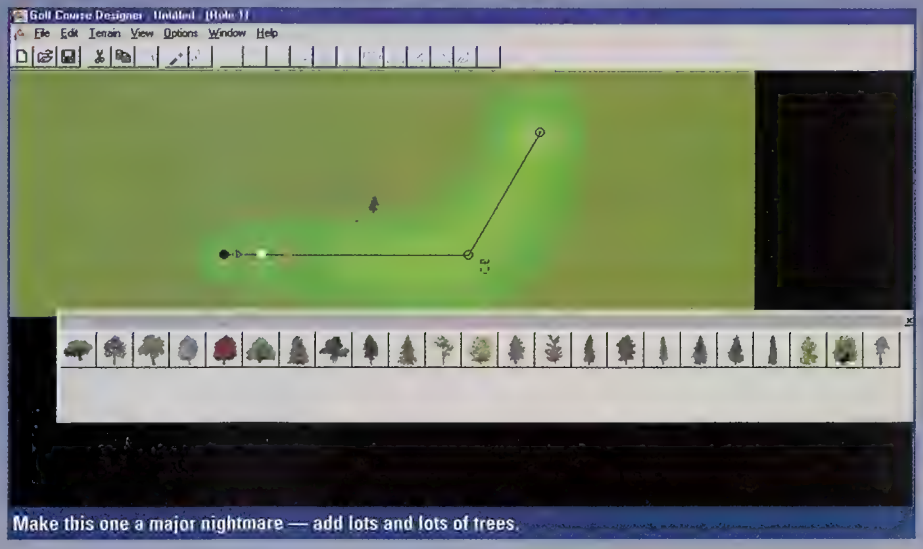
Jack Nicklaus 5: Course Designer

Win95

Company: Accolade
Tech Support: (408) 296-8400
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium;16MB of RAM; 42MB hard-drive space; DirectX; SVGA
Install: \JN5\JN5DEM0D.EXE

So you've played the world's best courses and laughed at their feeble attempts to lure you into water hazards and bunkers? Even the world's best courses no longer offer you any challenge? Well, here's your chance to create a course that would make Tiger Woods lose his cool. The *Jack Nicklaus 5: Course Designer* demo lets you to try your hand at creating three holes.

There are two different ways to get started: manual creation and course wizard. To begin manually creating a hole, right-click your mouse inside the course window, then click on New Hole. Use the crosshair as a starting point by clicking the mouse for tee placement — move the mouse away, and a line will appear showing the direction of the hole. Determine the distance and click again. This will be a par three hole; if you wish to make a longer hole (such as par four or five) simply add a shot. Once you're satisfied, click on Finish Hole. You can then go in and add trees, water, sand, and all those other fun hazards.



Make this one a major nightmare — add lots and lots of trees.

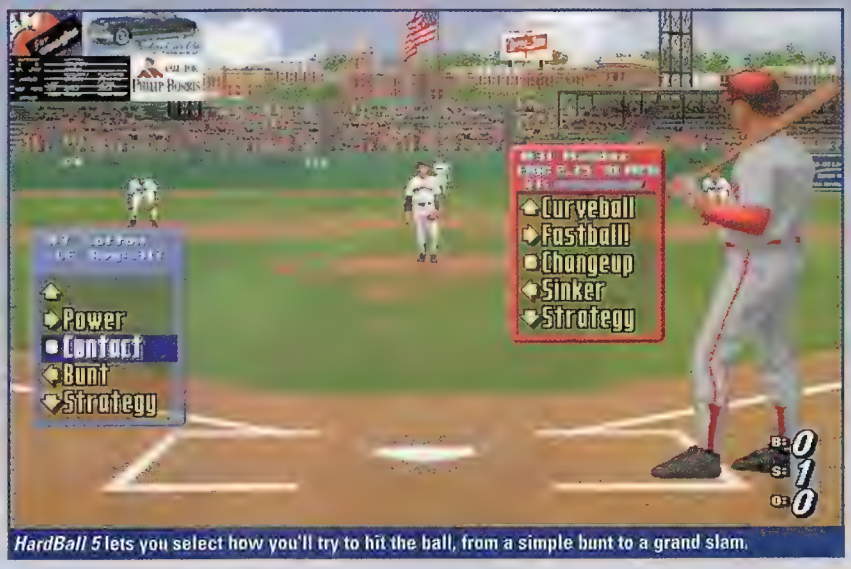
The course wizard does most of the work for you. You simply tell it what par you want the hole to be, if you want a dogleg left or right, and various other features. The interface is simple and easy to use, but fiddle around with the program for a little while before sitting down to do some serious hole designing. The demo also lets you save the holes.

HardBall 5

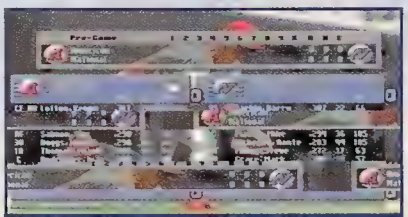
Company: Accolade
Tech Support: (408) 296-8400
Category: Sports
Required: DOS; 486; 8MB RAM;SVGA
Install: \HB5DEMO\HB5DEMO.EXE

With spring upon us and baseball fever reaching a frenzy, we give you more baseball goodness. This time it's *HardBall 5* from Accolade.

The demo lets you slug out two innings as either American League All-stars or National League All-stars. To get started, go to the Settings screen so you can configure your sound and controller. Once that's done, go back to the Main Menu and enter Exhibition mode. This will take you to the game setup screen, which shows your batting order and your opening pitcher. Go on to the game, and you're ready to go.



HardBall 5 lets you select how you'll try to hit the ball, from a simple bunt to a grand slam.


Check out these rosters. Who could go wrong with a lineup like this?

In order to bat, you'll need to select how you wish to hit the ball. Simply move your controller in the direction indicated by the arrow next to your selection, then press the swing button. To swing at the ball, simply press the swing button again. After you've had your nine swings and taken a seat, it'll be your turn to pitch.

Select your pitch the same way you chose your swing. A box will appear over the plate that outlines the strike zone; inside of that will be a crosshair. Move the crosshair to show where you want the ball to go, then press the button. If the batter gets a hit, you'll need to field the ball — you'll automatically take control of fielder closest to it. If you can't catch it in the air, try to toss the runner out at first. Those are the controls, and you already know the rules. Play ball!

SPECIAL NOTE: The *HardBall 5* demo runs directly off the disc. You'll also need to configure the sound each time you play.

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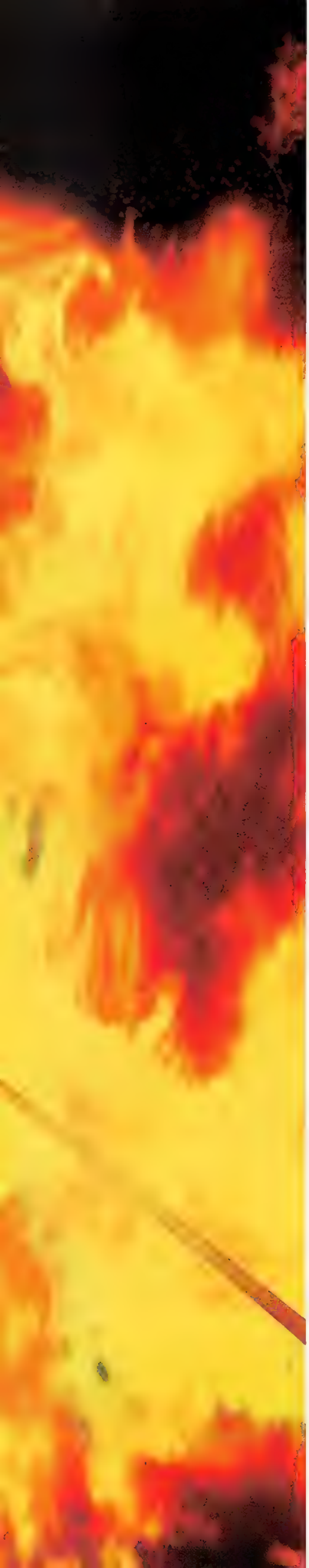

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Product Information Number 137

Star Trek: The Game Show

Win95

Company: Sound Source
Tech Support: Trivia Game
Category: (818) 878-0505
Required: Windows 95; 486/66, 16 MB RAM; SVGA; sound card
Install: \STARTREK\INSTALL.EXE

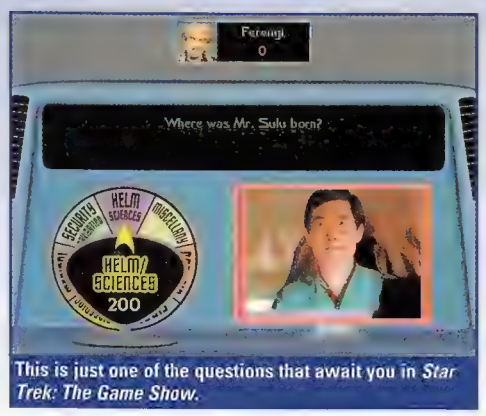
Okay, you know how many decks there were on the original Enterprise, and you know every *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode so well you can act them out with your cat, reciting the dialog from memory. That's all well and good (and a little sad), but do you have what it takes to go up against Q (John DeLancie) in the ultimate Star Trek trivia challenge?

HINT

During the bonus question, listen carefully — there's no excuse for missing this one.

The demo lets you answer one question from each of the categories, as well as one bonus question (you'll get the same questions each time you play). You're in competition, so you'll need to ring in your answer fast. To get your answer in, press the space bar, then the letter that corresponds to the answer you think is correct. Be sure to answer correctly, or Q will tear you apart with his razor-sharp tongue.

Good old arrogant Q. You'll have to know every nook and cranny of the Star Trek Universe to gain his respect.



This is just one of the questions that await you in *Star Trek: The Game Show.*

Fraggers rejoice!! One of the hottest *Quake II* modifications is Jailbreak, a nifty little game that lets you kill, and then execute, the opposing team. Ah, the joys of computer gaming...

Cool Game Add-Ons

Win95

Company: New World Computing
Tech Support: (818) 889-5650
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Turn-Based Strategy
Required: Windows 95, Pentium; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \H2DEMO\H2DEMOW.EXE

Beginning this month, *PC Gamer* will devote this space to giving you, our beloved readers, some fantastic add-ons for your favorite games. While maps for classics like *Red Alert, Warcraft II*, and *Quake* will still be regular guests on *The CD*, we're going to expand this section to include kick-ass mods, total conversions, and anything else cool and exciting we can find. This month, the focus is on *Quake II*.

For you SPQ2 fans, we've included a couple of single-player *Quake II* maps for your gaming pleasure, but we've also got our hands on a couple of nifty little multi-player mods. The first is called Jailbreak. Similar to the ever-popular Capture the Flag, Jailbreak divides players into two teams. But this time, instead of capturing the other team's flag, your goal is simply to frag as many of your opponents as possible. When a player is killed, he respawns inside the opposing team's jail — and there he'll stay until freed by a teammate (the only way to do that is to fight your way into the other team's base and push a button just outside the jail cell, opening the door). When every member of a team is jailed, they're all executed, resulting in a huge frag count for the other side.

Jailbreak currently has two maps and features mounted gun turrents with unlimited ammunition, among other nasty little surprises. Be sure to check out the README file for full instructions on how to get a Jailbreak session up and running.

Another goodie for all you Capture the Flag freaks is BOTS, or Battle of the Sexes. This variation on the CTF theme divides players up into two teams: male and female. The game plays just like normal CTF, but BOTS forces you to pick from several classes of fighter: a medic, a sniper, kamikaze, etc. Each class has its own strengths and can only use certain weapons. Be sure to read all the documentation for full details on every aspect of this mod.

Comments regarding the add-ons are always welcome, so feel free to send your suggestions to Assistant Disc Editor William Harms at bharms@pcgamer.com (or via regular mail care of *PC Gamer* offices). We want to make *The CD* better than ever, so let us know how we're doing and what you want to see.

HELP: To take control of the massive guns in Jailbreak, you'll need to bind a firing key. Once inside the game, press the tilde key (~) to enter the *Quake II* console and type: **bind q "+use"** and you're all set.

SPECIAL NOTE: Many of the add-on files on *The CD* (especially the *Quake/Quake II* mods) need to overwrite essential game files in order to run. Be sure to back up a game's files before installing a mod, and remember that *PC Gamer* can't provide technical support for these gewgaws. Also, you must own registered versions of these games to utilize these add-ons.

Take to the skies in *Fighter Ace*, the premier title for Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone.

Win95

Microsoft Fighter Ace

Company: Microsoft
Tech Support: (206) 637-9308
Category: Online Service
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 9.5MB hard-drive space; SVGA; 28.8Kbps Internet access; Internet Explorer 3.02 or higher

Fighter Ace is the Internet Gaming Zone's first "premium game," a World War Two air combat game designed specifically for play over the Internet. In *Fighter Ace*, more than 100 players can compete in a single flight arena while enjoying sophisticated aircraft graphics and terrain modeling.

Newbies will be glad to know you'll only fight against pilots of equal skill. A tracking system maintains your score and determines how fast you rise in the ranks. *Fighter Ace* features two modes of play: Arcade and Realistic, so you can choose the level of difficulty.

Fighter Ace is available on Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone (*www.zone.com*). After a free 24-hour trial, you can choose between a flat daily rate ($1.95) or a monthly fee ($19.95) to play. Internet connection charges may apply.

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. You can also go to *http:\\support.imagine-inc.com* or *www.pcgamer.com* for a FAQ.

The CD is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: PC Gamer Customer Service, The April 1998 Disc 3.13 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.

MindSpring

Tech Support: (800) 719-4660
Category: Online Service
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 14.4Kbps or faster modem
Install: \MSPRING\SETUP.EXE

MindSpring will launch you onto the Internet with all sorts of goodies at your disposal — you can use E-mail, the World Wide Web, read Usenet newsgroups, and even gain access to free news, stock information, and web support.

The pricing is competitive, too: the Light service gives you five hours of service a month for $6.95 and $2 per each additional hour, along with 5MB of web space for your own web page. The Standard plan is $14.95 a month for 20 hours, with each additional hour costing one dollar. You also get 5MB of web space with this one. The Unlimited service gives you unlimited hours for $19.95 a month (without web space), while The Works service gives you unlimited hours, along with two extra E-mail boxes and ten megabytes of web space for $26.95 a month!

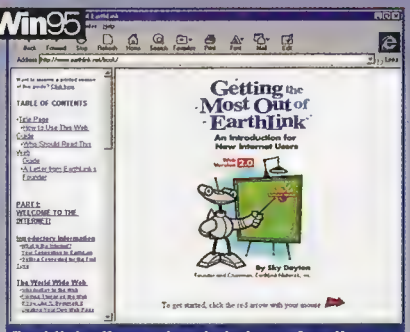
MindSpring uses its Pipeline+ software to give Windows 95 users a direct TCP/IP connection to the Internet, using the Microsoft Dial-Up Adapter. That means any of those online games that say they require a TCP/IP connection, like *Quake* or *Ultima Online*, will work beautifully with MindSpring. If you use Windows 3.1, MindSpring uses Connect rather than the Dial-Up Adapter, which gives you a 16-bit TCP/IP connection, so you can still play those online games (as long as they don't require a 32-bit connection). For the online gamer, MindSpring offers all you need to get hooked up and start fragging your friends!

With its realistic pricing and a whole slew of services available, MindSpring is a good jumping-off point for anyone wanting to get onto the Internet. Best of all, if you install the software from *The CD*, the $25 launching fee will be waived. Talk about service!

EarthLink

Win95

Company: Earthlink
Tech Support: (800) 395-8410
Category: Online Service
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 9600bps modem.



Earthlink offers a virtual pluthera of on-line support features, and it's all only a click away.

EarthLink Network, winner of the 1997 PC Magazine Editors' Choice Award for Best Internet Service Provider, supports all kinds of Internet games and even has its own online gaming site (*www.thearena.com*). EarthLink membership includes unlimited Internet access, unlimited E-mail, a free 6MB of space for your own web site, a free subscription to *bLink*, EarthLink's newsletter, and your choice of browser. We've got two ways for you to connect: a standard three-day trial or a special 14-day trial with a discount subscription to *PC Gamer*.

For the three-day trial, just install the software and enter all the information you're prompted for. You can test the service for three days; after that, you'll be billed for $19.95 a month unless you cancel.

The 14-day trial is a bit different. Subscribe to *PC Gamer* at a special low price, and you'll get two weeks to check out EarthLink. If you've already got a subscription and take advantage of this offer, you'll get an extra year added to your account.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

TRY before you BUY
The Easiest Way to Buy Software

Would you buy more software if you didn't have to make a trip down to the local shop, where you have to brave long lines and bad music, only to walk out with a program that may not be what you expected? The Try Before You Buy store is your solution: you can try out a product on your own time, and if you like it, you can purchase the whole thing from the comfort of your lovely living room. Just click on the Imagine logo when it pops up in *The CD*'s interface, or run the executable programs listed below to go directly to the title you're interested in.

Doom II for Windows 95 ..... \TRYB4UBY\DOOMIIT.EXE
TurboTax Federal 1040 16-bit ..... TRYB4UBY\TAX16PC.EXE
TurboTax Federal 1040 32-bit ..... \TRYB4UBY\TAX32PC.EXE
TurboTax California Rev A ..... TRYB4UBY\TAXCAPC.EXE
TurboTax Idaho ..... \TRYB4UBY\TAXIDPC.EXE
TurboTax Maine ..... TRYB4UBY\TAXMEPC.EXE
TurboTax North Dakota ..... \TRYB4UBY\NDPC.EXE

STAR
THE ONLY ALLIES
3 Unique Alien Species
Whether you command the nomadic Terrans, mysterious Protoss, or voracious Zerg, you must devise totally unique strategies to master the specialized units, abilities and technologies of each.
Intense Internet Competition
Challenge the world with FREE* access to Blizzard Battle.net.™ Up to 8 player Internet support including worldwide player rankings, tournaments and challenge ladders.
Unequaled Campaign Editor
Construct individual missions or entire campaigns with unrivaled options and ease.
BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
www.blizzard.com

CRAFT™

ARE ENEMIES.

REVOLUTIONARY SPECIAL EFFECTS

Real-time light sourcing, true line of sight and an advanced translucency engine combine for unparalleled visual and tactical realism.

MULTIPLE THEATERS OF BATTLE

Engage in a deadly mix of space combat, planetary assault and covert base infiltration. Command Ghost Espionage Agents, Protoss High Templars, and Zerg Defilers as you seek to conquer the galaxy.

*Free access to Battle.net requires access to the Internet. Player is responsible for all applicable Internet fees.
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Product Information Number 302

The PERFECT Sequel To The PERFECT STRATEGY Game

MAX 2: Complete Real-Time Combat

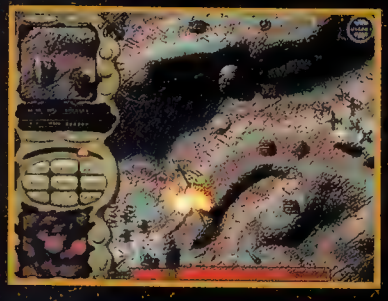
3D terrain affects movement line of sight, and combat results

Exquisite 16-bit color

Alien units regenerate and improve with experience

Unlimited waypoint settings for sneak attacks

Unique parallax scrolling with 3D topography



- Optional Pause To Give Orders
- Complete Scenario Editor
- Multiplayer Capability (LAN, Modem, Internet) With Alliance Building
- Simultaneously View Multiple Areas Of The Map With The Spy Cam
- Optional Turn-Based Play

Coming This Spring...

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Interplay
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Questions? E-mail max2@interplay.com

MAX 2
MECHANIZED ASSAULT & EXPLORATION

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Product Information Number 188

Extreme Warfare

What's so extreme about Trilobyte's new game? Just read on....

Trilobyte is famous for *The 7th Guest*, a best-selling graphic adventure. So what's the company doing creating an action game? Getting ready to knock your socks off!

—William R. Trotter

As these screenshots show, *Extreme Warfare* promises to take the 3D-action game to new visual heights. Add an engaging story, and this could be a hot game.

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Extreme Warfare
Category: Action
Developer: Trilobyte, Inc.
Publisher: Red Orb Entertainment, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 (415) 382-4400
Projected Price: n/a
Percent complete: 60%

In a nutshell:

Humans terraform Mars and set off a beacon. Turns out there was another race on the red planet before us, and they're coming back. It's Earth vs. Aliens on the largest scale you and your computer can handle.

What's so special?

The Trilobyte design team is pulling out all the stops to make *Extreme Warfare* excellent. Trilobyte created one of the first games to truly take advantage of CD-ROM, so they've got the technical chops.

Why should I care?

Extreme Warfare promises to let as many as 32 players to fight on huge battlefields while offering an equally intense, but totally different, single-player experience. The best of both worlds.

And when's it coming out?

Late Summer 1998

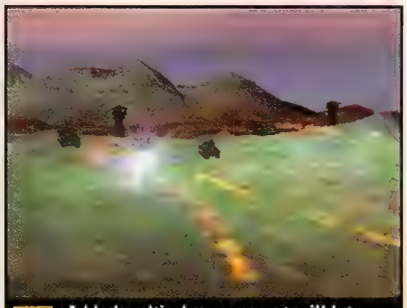
You've been entombed in *Doom*, nuked by Duke, and Quaked 'till you ached, but still you crave... more...*action*! Where can you turn this summer for that pixel-smashing rush, that accelerated 3D high? Where are you going to find "The Next Level"?

Well, the folks at Red Orb think a lot of action junkies will find it in Trilobyte's *Extreme Warfare*. And from what we've seen so far, the word "extreme" is not used lightly. Every element of this game has been conceived on an epic scale. From its rich and involving back-story to the grand narrative arc formed by its 24 battles, it could take action gaming out of its current "shoot-everything-that-moves" stasis and into a deeper experience — without sacrificing any of the primal excitement that draws so many to the genre.

There's a real *story* behind the bang-bang, too. Here's how it goes: Aeons ago, Mars was inhabited by an advanced civilization, but something — ecological cataclysm or an act of war — caused the Martians to flee and settle in the remote reaches of outer space. Countless years later, a Martian probe ship crashed into the Antarctic ice, where human explorers found it and helped themselves to its technology. In time, Mars was colonized and terraformed into a lush agrarian world. Then a team of archeologists uncovered an ancient Martian relic and inadver-

The Martian landscape provides the perfect setting for intergalactic war.

Usually graphics this impressive only show up during opening sequences and cut scenes, but this is an actual in-game shot. You can almost feel the ground shake from the impact.



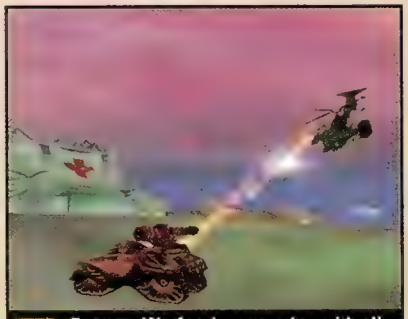
Added multi-player support will let gamers frag it out from anywhere.

tently sent a signal into the far reaches of space.

On the receiving end of that beacon was a race called the Sway, who revered Mars as a holy place and launched a vast interstellar invasion to take it back from the despoiling Earthlings. Earth and the Mars colonists had a decade's warning to prepare and build their defenses, but the Sway attacked Earth with superweapons and virtually wiped out its population. Mars, however, they decided to conquer with "conventional" weapons because of its status as a sacred place. The war, and the game, begins here.

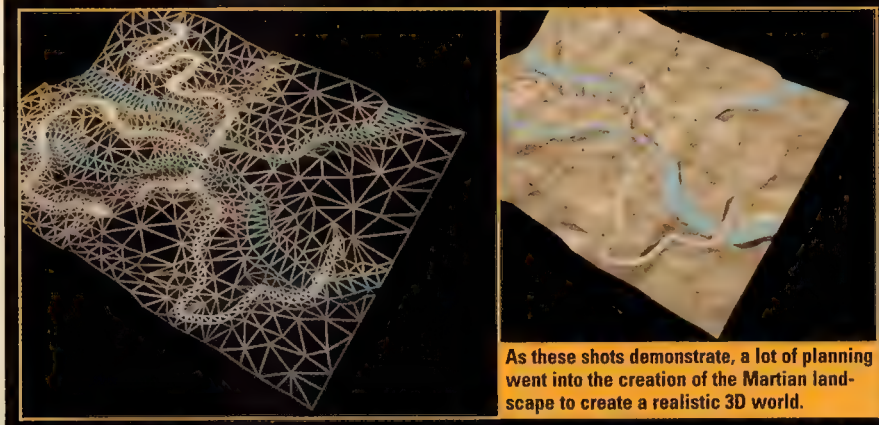
Extreme Warfare plays out as a series of 24 linked battles on unusually large and varied terrain maps. Sixteen Internet players can enlist on either side to form platoon-sized teams. Says Trilobyte's Todd Arnold, the game's producer, "We've set out to create 'combat without limits' to give players a level of action they've never experienced before. It's the *type* of action that will appeal to *Quake* fans, but when you get even a modest number of people competing on a *Quake* level, things start feeling oppressively crowded. *Extreme Warfare's* wide-open outdoor landscapes and complex terrain — including commanding elevations, trench systems, and tunnels — will enable us to accommodate 32 players without anyone feeling crowded."

Battles are not simply frag-fests, but take the form of real missions with specific, though simple, objectives. Before each engagement starts, each side has a planning-phase/chat-room period, during which players are briefed, study the map, and watch a 3D fly-by of the battlefield. This is where you decide which players will take which roles and what your tactics will be. There are ten combat vehicles and 25 different weapons (upgradable after you achieve certain goals), so every planning session will include selecting the right combination of vehicles and weapons to match the objective.



Extreme Warfare lets you play with all sorts of weapons. Burn, tank, burn!

THE DELIGHT IS IN THE DETAILS



As these shots demonstrate, a lot of planning went into the creation of the Martian landscape to create a realistic 3D world.

We were impressed with the many felicitous details that have been packed into *Extreme Warfare*'s design.

The smooth integration of indoor and outdoor environments, for example, allows you to pilot (or drive) a vehicle into and through a tunnel (very useful, tactically) and back out into bright sunlight again — a real piece of eye-candy.

A color/texture editor allows you to personalize the look of your platoon (in consultation with your comrades, of course).

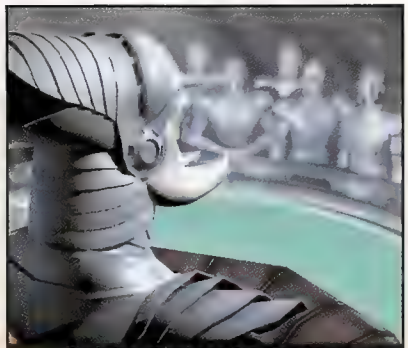
In multi-player games, two different players can occupy the same vehicle — one can jump into the bay of a supply transport and fire out the side while the other player takes over the controls as pilot.

Infantrymen can hide in trenches and pop up to fire at enemy attack choppers, then scuttle to safety in a new part of the trench system and shoot again, if need be. And in one mission, you must locate the entrance to a subterranean bunker that will allow you to transport troops safely underground while a battle rages above their heads.

And the graphic blandishments promise really immersive combat: lens flares, alpha-blended smoke, dynamic lighting, grouped-polygon explosions, and shattering effects — it's all there.

Terrain variations will be uncommonly rich. In addition to elevations and depressions, you'll fight and maneuver through deserts, water, snow, ice, and volcano ranges, all rendered more fully and realistically than any outdoor environments you see in other Internet-based action games.

While *Extreme Warfare* does promise more action than you can shake a stick at, there are also specific mission objectives that must be accomplished. Pay attention to the briefing.



Even the aliens need to plan. *Extreme Warfare* will show you both sides.

Trilobyte has put a lot of thought into the social aspect of the game. The network tracks every players' performance not only in terms of kills, but especially in terms of cooperation with other team members. This means a player who ranks as a colonel or general cannot automatically expect to be put in command every time, nor will he get into a snit if his comrades choose another slot for him — that's the theory, anyhow. And some missions, realistically, require some players to perform less glamorous tasks, like flying the transports or serving as gunners; to balance things, the ranking system looks with extra favor on players who volunteer for "the dirty work" and do well at it — flying a transport may not be as ego-stroking as being a tank commander, but in some missions it's more important, and doing it well can lead to rapid promotion. Another plan is to rank the campaigns themselves. If you want to join a unit that mixes raw recruits with experienced cadre, fine; but all-newbie and all-veteran wars will also be available.

What about the players who have online-phobia or just prefer the single-player experience? Trilobyte has not ignored their needs, but has approached this increasingly thorny problem with a clear eye and a fresh attitude. "Chief programmer Graeme Devine decided from the beginning *not* to simply take the multi-player game and warp it to accommodate solo play," Arnold says. "Instead, he carefully studied what makes a great solo game and designed an alternate version of *Extreme Warfare* that gives you a maximum solo experience. You still have an inventory of varied and challenging missions, and you still have to plan carefully your moves and your choice of weapons, but the battles pit you, in tense, do-or-die competition with formidable opposition, in solo missions against a very tough AI. It really works out to be quite a distinct gaming experience from the cooperative Internet mode, and I suspect that players who get hooked on one will also get addicted to the other."

But wait a minute, some of you are probably saying; all well and good, but isn't Trilobyte a company best known for its graphic adventures like *The 7th Guest*? Why the sudden jump in genres? And what makes Trilobyte so confident it can do this successfully?

"When *The 7th Guest* was released in 1993, it displayed pre-rendered art, 3D fly-bys, and full-motion video on a single-speed CD-ROM player that pushed the capacity of 486 machines to a level that made people's jaws drop," Arnold says. "The technology we've developed for *Extreme Warfare* will do the same. The game is scalable up to a Pentium II, 450MHz, with second-generation 3D/AGP systems, and it'll pump up to one million polygons a second on those advanced platforms. All our Internet servers worldwide will be linked so that players' scores and ranks can be accessed no matter what server you're playing on or where in the world you're calling from."

So "genre" doesn't have anything to do with it. Or maybe it does, because in talking with *Extreme Warfare*'s developers, we got the distinct impression that they are really committed to designing an action game that will be at least as much a landmark as *The 7th Guest* was in its field.

So keep a resin bag near your joystick, folks. *Extreme Warfare* is scheduled to hit the Internet sometime in late summer of 1998.

PCG

War does have casualties, such as this captive soldier. With its impressive graphics and intriguing story, *Extreme Warfare* has the makings of a game to be watched.

GREAT SOLDIERS AREN'T BORN.
THEY'RE MADE.

Screw natural selection. Take command of one of four unique clans, each vying for supremacy on an alien planet. Crush your enemies and splice their genes in your lab to make stronger, more diversified warriors. Showcase your shrewd combat skills and resource management in single- or multiplayer mode over modem/LAN/Internet. With over 37,000 possible genetic combinations, you survive as the fittest or become extinct.

TOP TEN REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME - *Computer Gaming World*

Visit our website at www.warbreeds.com.

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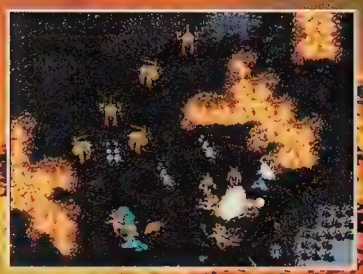
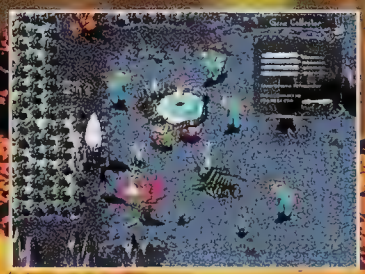


Locate, analyze and weaken your enemies by cu[illegible] and resources.



Use the DNA of conquered warriors to [illegible]

Arm your warriors with advanced bio-[illegible]

PLAYER

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

REDORB

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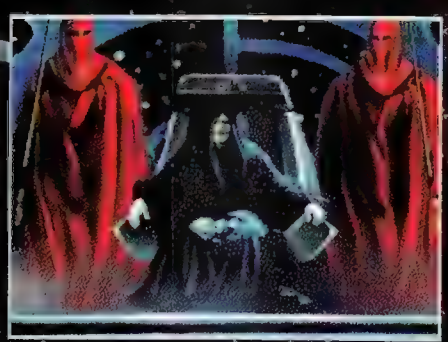
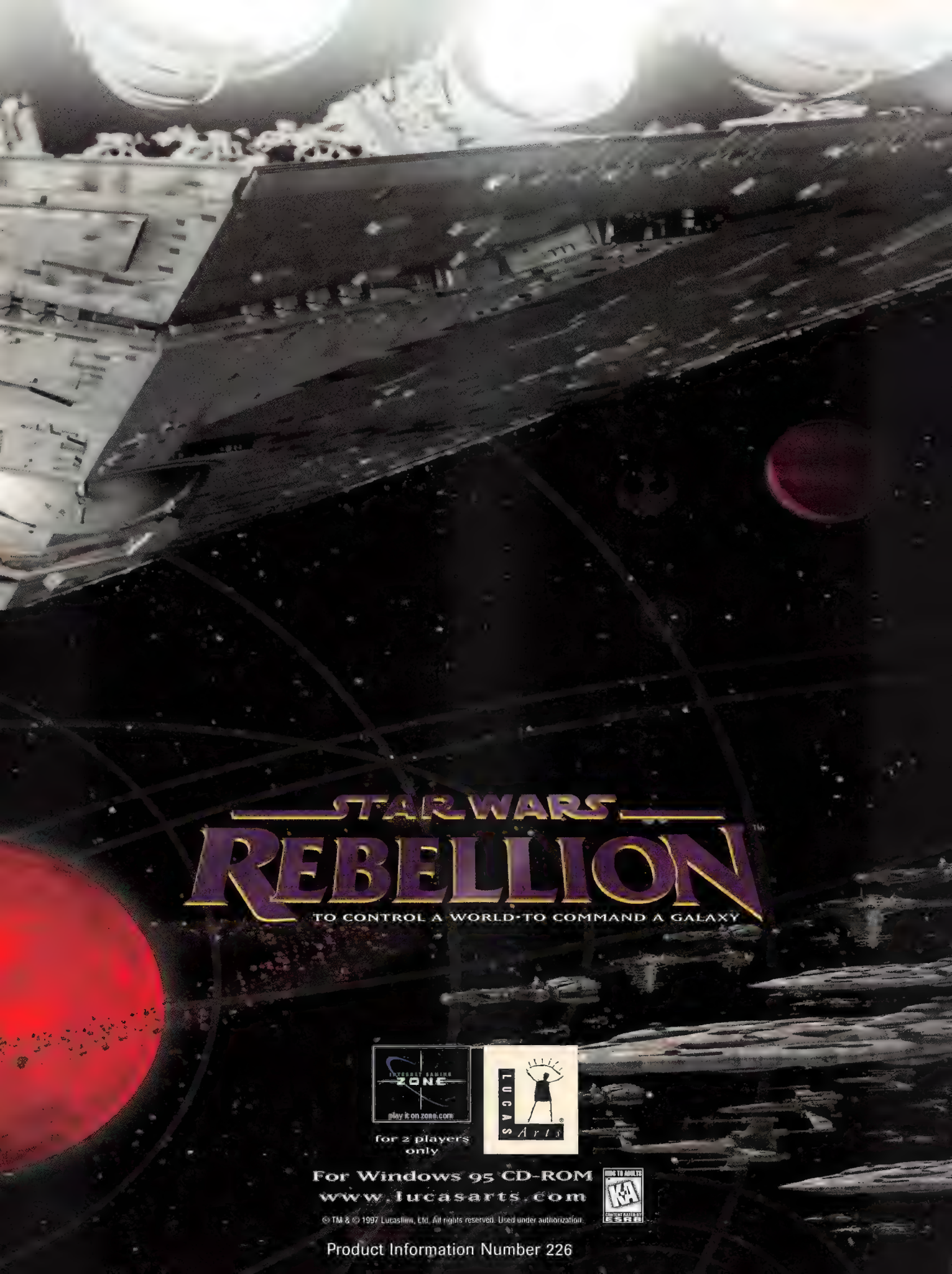
Product Information Number 103

TAKE THE GALAXY BY FORCE.

Conquer the galaxy through military action, diplomacy or covert operations. With *Star Wars Rebellion*, those are just a few of the ways to implement strategy and tactics on a grand scale – with control of the *Star Wars* galaxy as the prize. Command the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire. Engage in spectacular battles. Earn the loyalty (or resentment) of some 200 planets. Play in real-time, in single play mode or two player mode over a network, the Internet or direct connect. Is the Force with you? Discover for yourself.





Product Information Number 226

Forsaken

Can Probe's new shooter out-Descent *Descent*? It could happen...

With great multi-player modes, killer gameplay, and special effects that even impressed the guys at 3Dfx, *Forsaken* may be an impressive addition to the action genre.

— Colin Williamson

Everyone talks about the next *Quake* killer, but the next *Descent* killer? That's what Probe Entertainment is aiming for with *Forsaken*, an impressive looking action game.

FYI. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Forsaken
Category: 3D shooter
Developer: Probe Entertainment.
Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777
Projected Price: TBA
Percentage Complete: 70%

In a nutshell:

Forsaken is Probe's first attempt at a 3D-accelerated shooter and features a sci-fi storyline, lots of exploring, and controls that are even more polished than those of *Descent*.

What's so special?

Like a lot of games, *Forsaken* is high on visual impact, but unlike many, this game has actually got the gameplay to back those pretty pit'chers.

Why should I care?

Forsaken got the lion's share of attention — and praise — at *DC-Con*, a recent *Descent* convention. And in terms of hardware-enhanced graphics, *Forsaken* outshines even *G-Police*.

And when's it coming out?

April '98

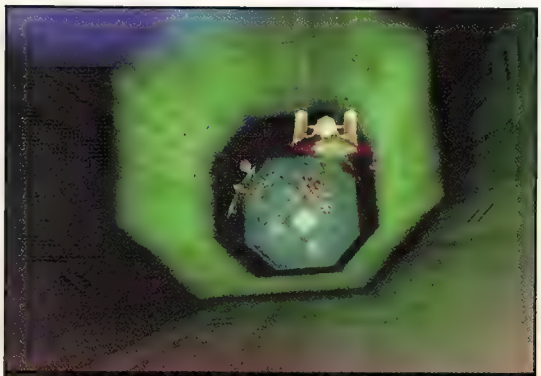
Looking at two of the most successful shareware games of all time, *Doom* and *Descent*, it's puzzling to see that the latter hasn't had a near equal number of clones. While games like *Duke* and *Quake* took the first-person genre to the next level, there haven't been many — if any — zero-g tunnel blasters that offered any significant gameplay after the release of *Descent 2*. But if Probe manages to pull off its latest project, *Forsaken*, that's definitely going to change.

The back-story certainly gives enough excuse to start blasting everything in sight: An innocent experiment on a future Earth results in the destruction of the entire solar system, and the salvage teams sent by the Intergalactic Council are having a heckuva time cleaning up the debris. Heading back for reinforcements, the salvagers drop off some security droids to discourage looting of the solar system's valuable remains. But those droids will have to put up a real fight to hold off the cash-starved likes of you, *Forsaken*'s anti-hero.

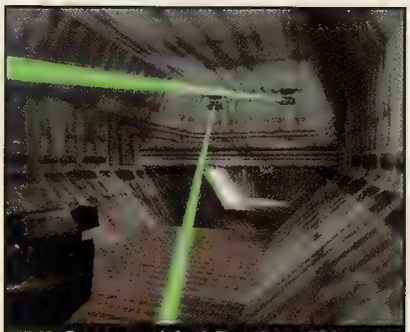
"Basically, you're a freeloading scumbag," explains Tony Beckwith, *Forsaken*'s lead designer, "and your job is to loot and pillage as much stuff as possible." To snatch up all that leftover cosmic booty, you'll use an armed-to-the-teeth hover bike, which is dropped from the belly of an orbiting ship. Zero gravity means exploration in any direction, and the infrequently attempted six-degrees-of-freedom gameplay has been seriously touched up in *Forsaken*. "There's tons of *Quake* genre games out there, but hardly any *flying* first-person shooters," Beckwith says. "It's comparable to — dare I mention it — *Descent*, although we really do think we are taking this game genre to the next level."

Forsaken's 16 single-player levels won't just be abandoned starships and scuzzy mines. Several of the levels have movie-inspired themes: There's a space station a la *Star Wars*, a capsized ship like in *The Poseidon Adventure*, and an Aztec temple that oozes *Indiana Jones*. Each level is loaded with gorgeous special effects, and there are even some you might not have seen before. "We have pools of water throughout various levels which actually ripple and have waves on

Six-degrees-of-freedom gameplay is one of the hallmarks for *Forsaken*.



The colored lighting effects in the 3D-accelerated version of *Forsaken* look impressive enough to give even the *Quake II* engine's impressive lighting a run for its money.



Fraggers rejoice! *Forsaken* will feature multi-player support for up to 40 players.

them," Beckwith says. "When you shoot at them, lots of concentric circles ripple out across the water. We have drips of water that drip from the ceiling on to the water, and those cause waves, too. It looks beautiful; no other game has ever done water like this before, but you can bet that every other game will have to do it this way from now on." And *Forsaken* wouldn't be a 3D shooter without a *little* blood 'n guts; blow up an enemy, and you'll see dismembered limbs floating out of the wreckage.

Forsaken is no performance slouch, either. The frame rates on a P200 with 3Dfx ranged from 30 to 70 frames per second, and a Voodoo 2 chipset will increase the game's speed to a mind-blowing level. "It really powers away on 3Dfx 2; it's incredible to watch the frame-rate," Beckwith says. Surprisingly, the game runs under Microsoft's Direct3D. "A lot of people thought that the game was written in GLIDE when the self-playing demo was first released," Beckwith says. "It's a very fast engine, but Direct 3D means we can support most 3D cards out there." By supporting D3D, owners of PowerVR2 and Riva chipsets will get to join in on the fun. A software renderer will even be supported for gamers who haven't made the 3D plunge yet.

Another aspect that Beckwith is excited about is *Forsaken*'s soundtrack. Given the game's British origins, the music will have a Euro-techno beat. "The guys who did the music are called The Swarm," Beckwith says. "One of the guys is freelance and the other works in-house here. Actually, a lot of people E-mailed us because they thought the music was The Orb. It has an industrial sound to it, a bit chaotic in places, rough and ready in others. There's guitar in there, but not in a heavy rock or metal type way."

The multiplayer modes in *Forsaken* promise to be just as compelling as the single-player game. Aside from standard DeathMatching, a form of Capture the Flag and a vicious game called *Bomb Tag* will be included. By using DirectPlay, Beckwith's team has managed to include support for modem to modem, TCP/IP, IPX, and Kali. Gamers will be able to set up their own servers via a patch that will be released after the game, which will also improve Internet performance and allow players to hop in and out of games without losing their ranking. "The only thing limiting the number of players will be the size of the levels we can create," Beckwith says. "I'm sure we're talking 30 to 40 players here." The Probe team is also working with the *GameSpy 3D* crew to add *Forsaken* support to the next release.

One of the things that kept *Quake* going was the unending number of patches, add-ons, and new maps from the user community. The *Forsaken* team realizes this and is keeping the game open-ended for ambitious designers at home. "We'll release the file format information soon," Beckwith says, "so people who have developed existing level editors can easily modify theirs to work with *Forsaken*. I have no doubt they'll be springing up all over the place."

But will *Forsaken* appeal to the *Descent* crew? Beckwith reckons so, thanks to the positive reactions of gamers at the *DC-Con Descent* convention. "We've been to some LANfests with the game, and it went down a storm. We've also had some of the best *Descent* players in the country come down to Acclaim to help us tune up the gameplay. They just love the game," he says. And if there's any doubt, the posters on the always-critical Usenet have been singing *Forsaken*'s praises.

"You're a freeloading scumbag, and your job is to loot and pillage as much stuff as possible."

—TONY BECKWITH, *FORSAKEN*'S LEAD DESIGNER

Though many of Acclaim's previous PC titles were simple ports of existing console games, Beckwith is quick to point out that *Forsaken*'s development takes the opposite approach. "*Forsaken* is really a PC game," he says. "It started on PC. It's Acclaim's first real venture into PC territory, and *Forsaken* clearly shows that they can be up there with the big boys."

PCG

Beyond the pretty pictures, *Forsaken* looks to be an exciting action game.

Instead of keeping you restricted to flying through mines, *Forsaken* will let you blast it out in multiple environments, each one created with exceptional detail.

19:42 You learn the hard way in the outer sectors... Like never get into a drinking match with a three-headed Bvkan. Never assume a Strogg is dead even when he's nothing but bloody scraps of strapped. And never go to bed with a Rabaul no matter how many breasts she has.

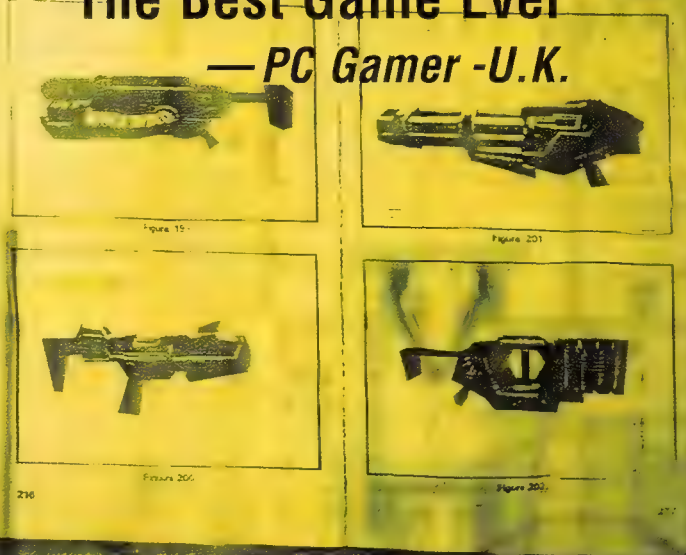
"The most anticipated game of the year lives up to its billing."
— *PC Games*

19:11

THE LINE BETWEEN MAN AND MACHINE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ERASED.

Blood vessels and wires should never have been crossed. Souls and circuitry, brain stems and processors.

"The Best Game Ever"
— *PC Gamer -U.K.*



"No other game can immerse you into its world as effectively as Quake II does."
— *Computer Games Strategy Plus*

www.idsoftware.com

	LINE NO.	EVALUATION
1	Large, complex missions	What you do in one level could affect another. One false move and you could alert security, flood a passageway, or worse.
2	Superior artificial intelligence	The enemy is far from stupid. They will evade attacks, maneuver into strategic attack locations, and hunt your ass down.
3	Intense environments	Man gun turrets. Blow up subways. Smash glass. Toss grenades with perfect control. Duck to evade hits. Give them Hell.

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ACTIVISION. id

U.S. MARINE CORPS 25-METER ZEROING PROCEDURES

U.S. MARINE CORPS TARGET

FRONT SIGHT

FRONT SIGHT

FRONT SIGHT

REAR SIGHT

08:03 Grotesque images of Strogg have been filling my sleep at night. Their metallic spines jutting awkwardly through muscle, skin and connective tissue, masks of human facial skin smeared and bonded to their cyber-alloy heads, crude but powerful weapons jammed into oozing, gaping sockets. Thank God the endless sleep ahead is Dreamless.
17:05 It's either us or them this time. We lose, and we all end up barbecued on the grill of some warped mechanized carnivore. We win, and the human Coalition of Man can start rebuilding the cities on Mars, Olympus, even Earth. Who knows - they might even get the old interplanetary football league going again. God, I miss Monday Night Football.
IV - 39
"Action Game of the Year" — Computer Gaming World
QUAKE II™
Product Information Number 89

Final Fantasy VII

The revolutionary PlayStation hit comes to the PC

With 3D-accelerated graphics, faster frame rates, and an improved soundtrack, *Final Fantasy VII* is ready to change the world of PC roleplaying forever.

—Michael Wolf

FYI. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Final Fantasy VII
Category: Roleplaying
Developer: SquareSoft
Publisher: Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA, 94111, (415) 547-1200
Projected Price: $60
Percentage Complete: 70%

In a nutshell:

The incredible PlayStation RPG *Final Fantasy VII* will hit PCs with 3D-accelerated graphics, faster frame rates, and one of the most incredible stories a roleplaying game could provide.

What's so special?

The first SquareSoft PC release could very well revolutionize the computer RPG genre. There are already two known RPGs in development that use the same sort of play style, but Square did it first.

Why should I care?

The graphics, story line, cutscenes, and play control are unlike anything you've played on the PC before. Roleplaying fans everywhere should keep an eye out for this one.

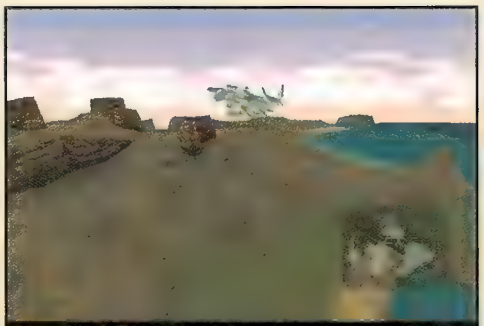
And when's it coming out?

Summer 1998

The Final Fantasy series has long been recognized as the best roleplaying series on any console system. Starting off on the Nintendo, the series has gathered a huge following, both in Japan and in the United States. Now, for the first time, SquareSoft is porting a game to the PC. And what an amazing game it is.

The story unfolds as you control Cloud Strife on a mission to save the planet from the evil machinations of the Shinra Company. They're using their Mako reactors to drain the life force from the very earth itself, and when the planet fights back, all hell breaks loose. The story is convoluted, with more plot twists and turns than California's Pacific Coast Highway, but you'll eventually have a total of nine characters in your party as you travel the world and explore every nook and cranny of the 3D rendered universe.

For those of you unfamiliar with previous Final Fantasy games, there's a definite feel to each one of them. Most recognizable is the combat system. It's turn-based, where you decide what each character does when they step up to attack — whether it's cast a spell, fight hand-to-hand, or use an item. The choices are presented in menus underneath the view of the action. *Final Fantasy V* (released only in Japan), however, introduced the time meter, which determines when a character can make a move. Combining turn-based combat with real-time anxiety makes for some sweaty-



The landscapes of the world map are much crisper than those found in the PlayStation version.

The 3D-accelerated version makes scenes like this even more stunning. You can even see Cloud's eyebrows! SquareSoft hired an artist just to touch up details like this.

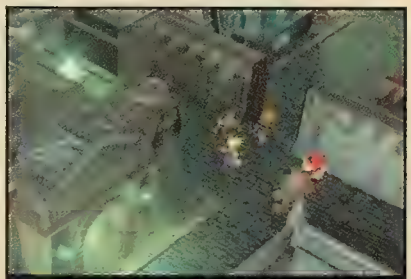
Things get pretty hairy when your health meters start running low and you have a little while to wait before your next move. Can you get a shot off in time to save your party?

palmed fights, as you try to get off one more Summon spell before you're wiped out. This combat system, along with some of the deepest, most involving story lines ever seen in a computer game and graphics that push the envelope, are what makes SquareSoft games such successes.

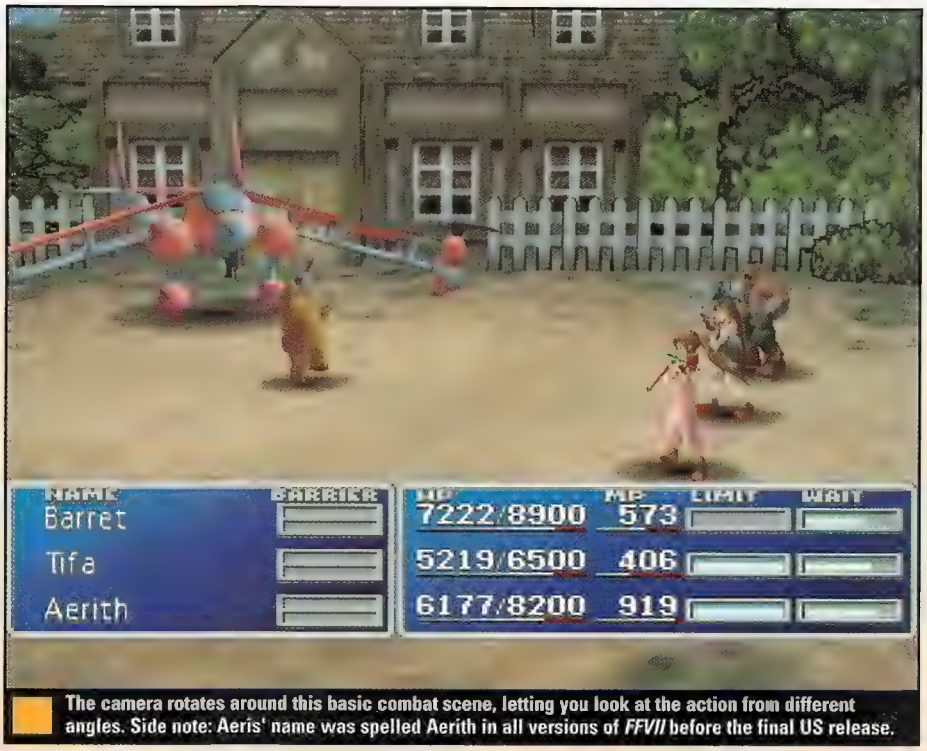
Final Fantasy VII is no different. The graphics changed the way people looked at the Sony PlayStation; the story line is as involving as some of the best fantasy novels; and the gameplay is filled with hundreds of combinations of weapons, items, magic spells, and even mini-games.

You control your party through a third-person view. As you wander through the world, you enter combat randomly — you might be running across a grassy plain and suddenly go head-to-head against some enemies. The perspective changes to a more cinematic view, with the camera changing angles dynamically as you attack, cast spells, and defend your characters. It's all rendered in 3D on the fly, so you'll never see things from the same angle. The most impressive shows come when you use Summon spells to call forth monsters, such as a demon that spits fire or a dragon that rains down fire from the skies.

Magic works in the form of materia orbs. You equip them into slots in your weapons and armor — the more slots, the more materia you can carry. The possibilities of how to outfit your characters with materia are endless. Five types exist — Green, Yellow, Purple, Blue, and Red. Within each color are several different spells. The materia works in conjunction with other materia, as well. For example, the blue support materia "All" can combine with the green spell materia "Fire" to cast the Fire spell on not one enemy but all enemies opposing you. Materia orbs



Some of the rendered backgrounds had to be touched up because of the extra detail you can see in the 3D accelerated version.



The camera rotates around this basic combat scene, letting you look at the action from different angles. Side note: Aeris' name was spelled Aerith in all versions of *FFVII* before the final US release.

can also gain experience with the characters, which means the more you carry around an orb, the more powerful spells you can cast with that orb.

With the PC release, people who have played the PlayStation version will encounter a vast difference in visual quality. SquareSoft will provide Direct3D support for enhanced 3D-accelerated graphics, and 3Dfx and Rendition are working with them to provide chip-specific drivers. As of now there is no word of other chip manufacturers getting on the bandwagon, but it won't come as any surprise if PowerVR and NVIDIA sign on. The frame rates we saw at the SquareSoft offices were astounding. While the PlayStation ran the game at a constant 15 frames per second, SquareSoft hopes to have the game running at twice that speed in the PC version.

The visual quality will be the biggest change from the PlayStation version. The text will get some attention, though, but mostly just to adjust some glaring spelling and grammatical errors. An in-house graphic artist is also fixing up some of the art. With the clarity of 3D acceleration, some of the backgrounds need to be tweaked to bring out more detail.

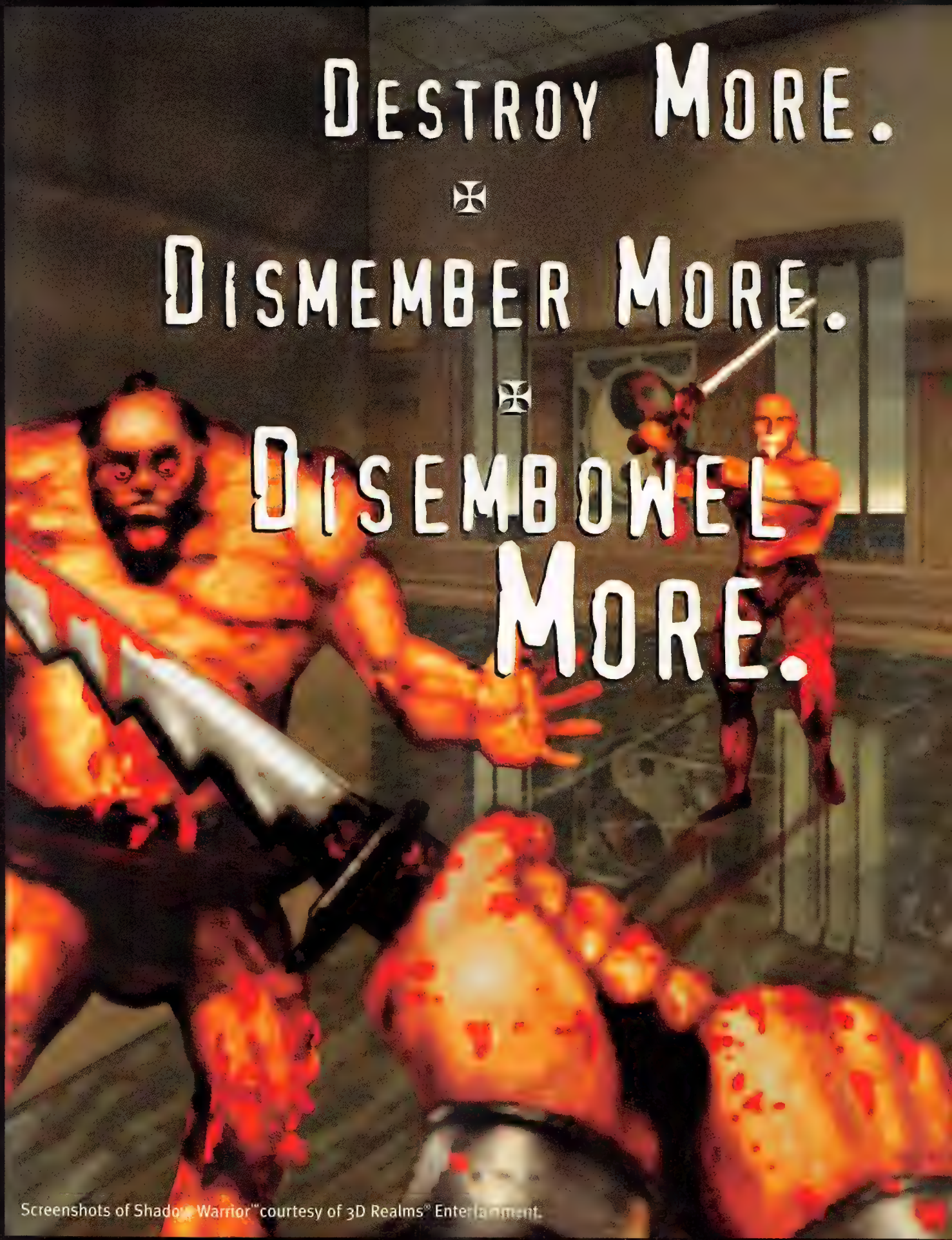
Many people complained that the sound quality in *Final Fantasy VII* wasn't up to par with earlier releases, and many criticized SquareSoft's decision to go with MIDI tracks rather than pure digital audio. This will be fixed somewhat in the PC release; SquareSoft is working with Yamaha to get the sound files optimized for Yamaha's XG MIDI software synthesizer technology. Right now, Yamaha is working with the music files to tweak it to the best possible sound quality. It still won't be digital audio, but the sound will be better. The XG format will be available for high-end machines. If you don't have the power, you'll hear the regular MIDI sounds from the PlayStation version, which are still good.

"A direct port shouldn't take [a year], but we pretty much had to rebuild most of [the game] from scratch."

— RANDALL FUJIMOTO, VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Final Fantasy VII isn't just another PlayStation conversion. According to Randall Fujimoto, the vice president of product development, the PC port has been in development for more than a year. "A direct port shouldn't take that long," he says, "but we pretty much had to rebuild most of it from scratch." Because SquareSoft is usually a one-platform company, the game was originally built and optimized only for the PlayStation. Turning it into a PC product took huge amounts of time and effort. The effort shows through in every element of the game, from the graphic details to the improved soundtrack to the faster frame rates. When the game releases this summer, it looks poised to revolutionize the world of PC roleplaying forever. We can hardly wait.

PCG



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  - –Jedi Knight™: Dark Forces™ II–Pathways to the Force™
- Heavy Gear™ by Activision™–Full Version
- TombRaider II™ by Eidos Interactive™ Special Edition
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THE Best-Selling Games OF 1997

PC Data publishes its annual list

Coming as no surprise (and much to our dismay here at the *PC Gamer* office), the final tally from PC Data of the top selling games for 1997 shows *Riven: The Sequel to Myst* leading the pack. The numbers are derived from actual retail sales data sent by vendors to PC Data. According to Phil Molloy, a representative of the company, PC Data has a seventy percent market coverage, and these totals are estimated to reflect one hundred percent of the market, so the figures may be off by just a bit. Regardless, the hard-core gamers here at *PC Gamer* are still trying to figure out how the gruesome twosome of *Riven* and *Myst* continue to sell in phenomenal amounts. We were encouraged, however, to find great games like *Diablo* and *Nascar II* near the top of the list, and latecomers like *Jedi Knight* and *Quake II* did show respectable totals in a short time.

Despite its mind-numbing, illogical gameplay, *Riven* raked in the dollars. Do you think there'll be a *Myst III*?

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE TITLE FIRST APPEARED	THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD
1. Riven: The Sequel to Myst	Broderbund	10/97	915,413
2. Myst	Broderbund	2/94	869,774
3. Microsoft Flight Simulator	Microsoft	4/96	813,830
4. Diablo	Cendant Software	12/96	670,155
5. Monopoly	Hasbro Interactive	10/95	397,864
6. Nascar II	Cendant Software	11/96	388,473
7. Barbie Fashion Designer	Mattel	9/96	363,541
8. Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Virgin	3/96	363,207
9. Barbie Magic Hair Styler	Mattel	9/97	361,141
10. Trophy Bass	Sierra	10/95	356,280
11. Lego Island	Mindscape	9/97	323,085
12. 40 Best Win 95 Games	Learning Co.	4/96	303,226
13. Microsoft Return of Arcade	Microsoft	3/96	286,959
14. X-Wing vs Tie Fighter	LucasArts	4/97	286,002
15. Tomb Raider	Eidos	10/96	283,139
16. Quake	GT Interactive	9/96	273,936
17. Warcraft Battle Chest	Blizzard	11/96	262,911
18. Deer Hunter	GT Interactive	9/97	260,118
19. Scrabble	Hasbro Interactive	9/96	257,339
20. Tonka Construction	Hasbro Interactive	8/96	252,120
21. Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	10/97	247,036
22. Quake II	Activision	10/97	240,913
23. Wheel of Fortune	Graphix Zone	12/94	237,720
24. Duke Nukem 3D Atomic Edition	GT Interactive	12/96	228,694
25. Tomb Raider II	Eidos	11/97	218, 773

Gamers' Choice Awards

What were the best games of 1997? We know — because you told us!

If you visited our web site (*www.pcgamer.com*) during the month of January, you may have seen a link in our Features section to something called the Gamers' Choice Awards. Here we invited you, our readers, to tell us what you thought were the best games of the past year. In many cases, you agreed with our choices for the PC Gamer Awards, but there were exceptions. Most notable was the support for *Wing Commander Prophecy*, which wound up giving *Quake II* (your winner and one of our runner-ups) a good fight for Game of the Year. The biggest discrepancy came in the real-time strategy category. *Total Annihilation* was your favorite by a large margin with *Age of Empires* coming in a respectable second. Our choice, *Myth*, finished a disappointing third. The number of votes cast this year was impressive — we appreciate your participation, and look forward to doing it again next year!

How Did the PCG Award Winners Fare?

Last month, we made our picks for the best games of 1997. With the final sales totals in, we thought it would be interesting to see how many people actually *bought* the games we enjoyed so much this past year. Keep in mind that many of these titles came out late in the year, so they might not have had a lot of time to pick up steam yet.

GAME OF THE YEAR
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II
247,036

ACTION & MULTI-PLAYER
Quake II
240,913

ADVENTURE
The Curse of Monkey Island
52,049

REAL-TIME STRATEGY
Myth: The Fallen Lords
40,617

SIMULATION
Longbow 2
49,397

SPORTS
NHL 98
134,714

WARGAME
Panzer General II
42,481

ROLEPLAYING
Fallout
53,577

ARCADE
Moto Racer GP
54,810

TURN-BASED STRATEGY
Incubation
4,805

EXPANSION PACK
Quake Mission Pack 2: Dissolution of Eternity
53,438

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT IN CINEMATICS & MUSIC
Interstate '76
74,028

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND
Dungeon Keeper
113,407

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT IN HYPE
Riven
915,413

(Proving once again that hype is still the most powerful force in the known universe. D'Oh.)

GAME OF THE YEAR

GAME	% OF VOTE
Quake II	22.69%
Wing Commander Prophecy	20.18%
Jedi Knight	16.89%
Fallout	16.31%

ROLEPLAYING

GAME	% OF VOTE
Fallout	71.82%
Ultima Online	20.10%
Betrayal at Antara	5.97%
Shadows Over Riva	2.11%

ACTION

GAME	% OF VOTE
Quake II	32.54%
Wing Commander Prophecy	30.31%
Jedi Knight	21.70%
Tomb Raider 2	6.83%

ADVENTURE

GAME	% OF VOTE
Blade Runner	44.77%
Curse of Monkey Island	36.82%
Riven	13.60%
The Last Express	2.24%

SPORTS

GAME	% OF VOTE
NHL 98	33.44%
FIFA 98	28.11%
Links LS 98	9.25%
NBA Live 98	8.33%

SIMULATION

GAME	% OF VOTE
Longbow 2	64.36%
Red Baron 2	10.12%
EF 2000 2.0	7.18%
688I Hunter/Killer	6.56%

WARGAME

GAME	% OF VOTE
Panzer General II	44.57%
Sid Meier's Gettysburg!	27.68%
Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far	20.09%
Steel Panthers III	3.15%

EXPANSION PACK

GAME	% OF VOTE
Red Alert: Aftermath	32.97%
XvTIE: Balance of Power	26.97%
Diablo: Hellfire	20.71%
Quake: Scourge	14.42%

REAL-TIME STRATEGY

GAME	% OF VOTE
Total Annihilation	50.08%
Age of Empires	23.96%
Myth	10.22%
Dungeon Keeper	8.64%

MULTI-PLAYER

GAME	% OF VOTE
Jedi Knight	26.30%
Quake II	25.35%
Total Annihilation	23.09%
X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter	14.16%

TURN-BASED STRATEGY

GAME	% OF VOTE
Incubation	36.18%
X-COM Apocalypse	32.54%
Warlords III	17.11%
M.A.X	7.9%

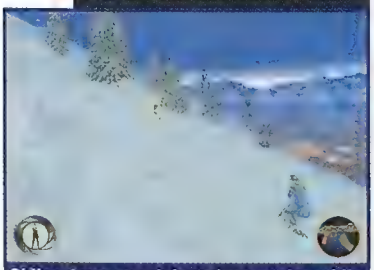
ARCADE

GAME	% OF VOTE
Moto Racer GP	48.59%
Nuclear Strike	20.74%
Pro Pinball: Timeshock	16.75%
Death Rally	9.62%

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Tomorrow Never Dies: The Mission Continues

In what could turn out to be an inspired move, MGM Interactive's upcoming game *Tomorrow Never Dies* has nothing to do with the movie it takes its name from. To avoid being restricted by the confines of the film's story, this action title will pick up where the movie ended. Instead, developer Black Ops is loosely basing the game on all the cool action sequences that popularized the numerous Bond movies for the past (if you can believe it!) four decades. The design is quite ambitious, and will attempt to integrate five different types of gameplay (skiing, driving, flying, underwater, and on foot). Combining so many styles in one game usually yields mediocre results, but Black Ops is working hard to make the diverse elements a strength of the game. For all you Q fans out there, *Tomorrow Never Dies* will be loaded with gadgets to help James defeat the evil mastermind and win the girl (hope we didn't just spoil the plot for anybody). Pierce Brosnan's likeness will be used, and MGM Interactive is hoping to get the game into stores by fall.



Skiing down tree-infested mountains while avoiding enemy gunfire is just the beginning of your fun in *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

iF-22 v.5

Interactive Magic's internal development team, iMagic Labs, is working on the follow-up to *iF-22*. The game will use Interactive Magic's TALON (Total Air and Land Operation Network) campaign system to create its missions. What TALON does is allow all the units involved in the game (both enemies and allies) to have

Continued on page 48a

Sierra Gets Serious About Sports

Announces new brand title for all its upcoming sports games

Sierra Sports is the brand new brand name for all the games that used to be published under the Papyrus and Front Page Sports banners, and although the name will change, the talent will remain firmly in place. The official announcement was made at this year's Daytona 500 in February, where Sierra also announced its 1998 lineup.

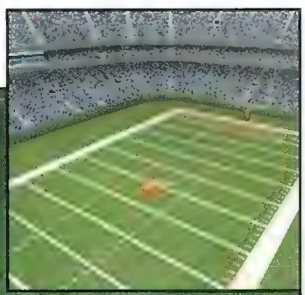
Three development teams will make up Sierra Sports. Papyrus will continue to produce its award-winning motor sports titles, Dynamix will focus on the recreation and outdoor products, such as golf, fishing, and skiing, and Front Page Development will be responsible for the team and stadium sports.

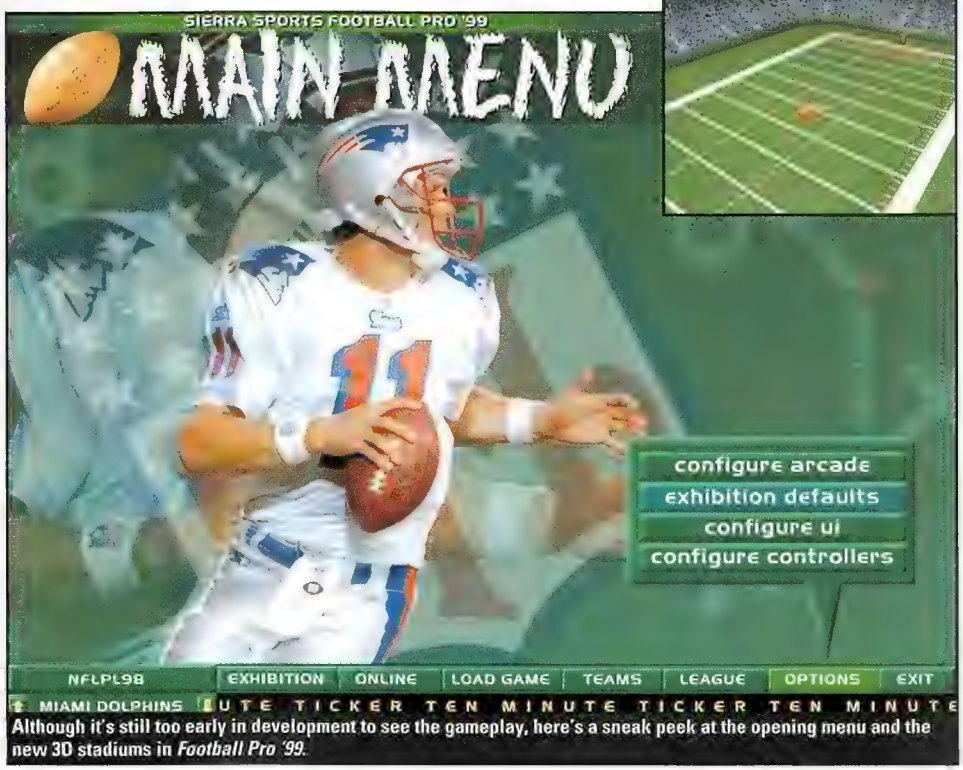
Of course for the most part, gamers aren't that concerned who the publisher is – a game lives or dies by the quality of its content and execution, not by the name on the box. With that in mind, Sierra Sports will not fool with the recipe that made many of its games successful, namely the motor sports, and outdoor titles. *NASCAR 3* and *Grand Prix Legends* are being developed by Papyrus, while Dynamix will be working on *Golf 2.0* (which will include a course architect) and *World Cup Racing*.

That helmet won't be of much help if you get airborne in one of these cars. *Grand Prix Legends* will let you relive the thrills and chills of the 1967 season.

Where Sierra has fallen off lately has been in the team sports genre, but both *Baseball Pro '99* and *Football Pro '99* will be rebuilt from the ground up, with the aim of appeasing many gamers who were getting tired of the same game being released every year with just minor additions. The major news is the announcement of a game that has been floating around the rumor mill for several years: *Basketball Pro '99*.

If Sierra Sports can manage to inject new life into its flagging team sports games, while maintaining the high level of quality of its motor and outdoor sports titles, it may just find itself in a position to challenge industry leader EA Sports. From what we've seen of *Baseball Pro '99* (see our baseball preview feature starting on page 85 for more details), things are heading in the right direction.





Although it's still too early in development to see the gameplay, here's a sneak peek at the opening menu and the new 3D stadiums in *Football Pro '99*.

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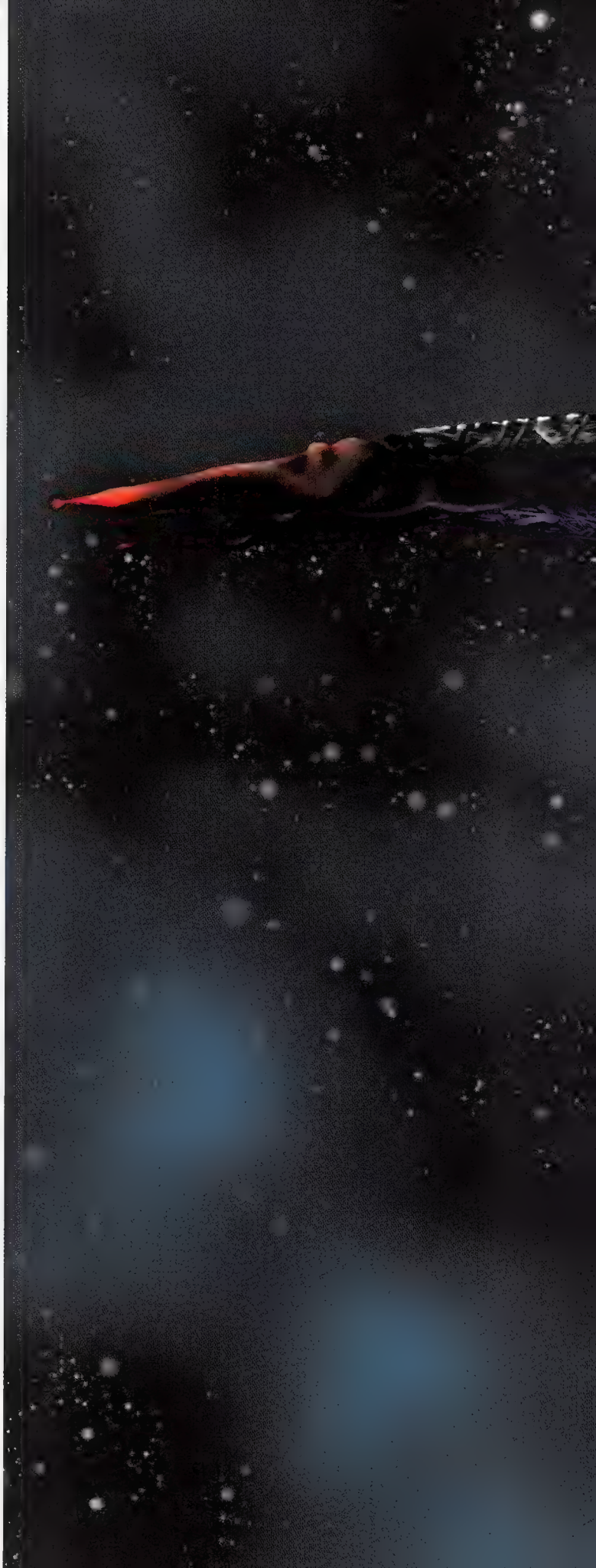

Continued from page 46

their own agendas, and to react appropriately to situations caused by the player or computer-controlled units. This should give the campaigns a much more dynamic feel. Improved graphics and an active cockpit that will put all the controls at your fingertips, letting you make adjustments by clicking the buttons and switches with your mouse, are just a few of the enhancements planned. *iF-22 v.5* ships this spring.

Experience the thrill of taking off from and landing on the deck of a carrier with *iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter.*

iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter

iMagic Labs' next project will attempt to capture the thrill of being a Navy fighter pilot, patrolling the seas from your base of operation aboard a carrier. The F/A-18E, or Super Hornet as it's known to insiders, is a versatile plane used as a fighter as well as for search and destroy sorties, making it an ideal subject for a mission-filled simulation. The dynamic campaign generator will create an unlimited number of missions, so the player will never have to fly the same one twice. *iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter* is scheduled for release some time this summer.

Age of Wonders

For all of you *Heroes of Might and Magic* fans out there, here's some news that might interest you. Epic MegaGames is preparing *Age of Wonders*, a turn-based strategy game set in a fantasy universe. The story is set in the early days of civilization on Earth, when Elves ruled the land. All was peaceful until the

Continued on page 49

Internet Rocks Chess

Internet Chess Club hopes to lure thousands of players online

In a bold move, the Internet Chess Club (ICC), a commercial chess-playing service, has finalized plans with the U.S. Chess Federation (USCF) to offer a free trial membership to all 85,000 USCF members.

The agreement offers a free one-month ICC membership and the chance to experience playing online. For the ICC, the potential for a future, long-term audience is huge — of the USCF's 85,000 members, 37,000 are under age 20.

"This agreement is a win-win for both organizations," says USCF Executive Director Michael Cavallo. "ICC maintains its status as an elite online play provider, and USCF members receive an important new membership benefit."

The USCF's own web site (*www.uschess.org*) doesn't offer live play, a situation the USCF felt a need to address. According to USCF Assistant Director Eric C. Johnson, "Over the past year, USCF has upgraded its web site and made online coverage of major chess events a priority. Our next goal was to tap the online play market; we wanted a partner with experience and a reputation for quality service".

This strategy may serve the USCF well in reaching new members. "I think the explosion in the number of chess sites on the Internet is catering primarily to the casual player," Johnson said. "The challenge is to take these players and provide them with the information about what a real tournament experience is like. I've often thought that if a new player can be convinced to visit a really large tournament (200-300 players), that person will be a chess player for life."

When asked if the USCF will begin rating games played online, Mr. Johnson stressed that there is a possibility, but that, "Over-the-board (OTB) and online play are different things and need different systems. With OTB, there are fewer concerns about cheating or using outside help, or even verifying your opponent's identity. Under online playing conditions, you have much less confidence that your opponent is who they say they are."

The ICC, located at *www.chessclub.com*, has already become one of the largest online chess-playing services, currently serving more than 30,000 games each day. Besides the ability to play live opponents, the ICC has evolved into an international social environment and lists more than 80 Grand and International Masters among its ranks.

The free membership offer will begin in the spring. Also as part of the agreement, the ICC will become the official host for the USCF's web site.

ICC's deal with the USCF could bring thousands of chess mavens online.

The USCF

The USCF is a not-for-profit membership organization and serves as the national governing body for chess in the U.S. It also represents U.S. players in the World Chess Federation (FIDE) and publishes Chess Life and School Mates magazines. For a free sample copy of either magazine, write to:

U.S. Chess Federation
3054 NYS Rte 9W
New Windsor, NY 12553

or call: (914) 562-8350.

And When We Say

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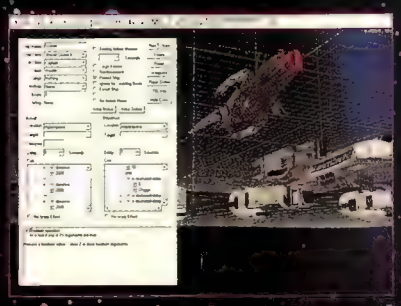

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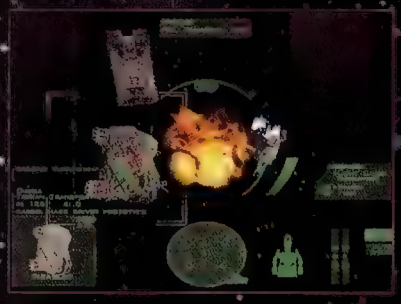
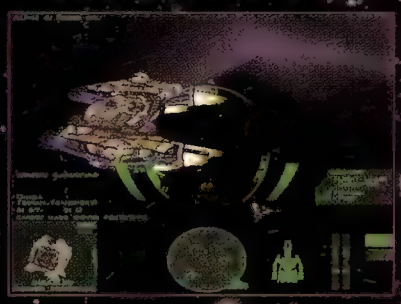
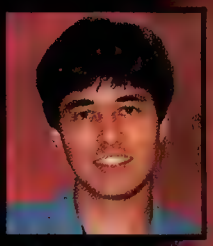




When we set out to create Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War, our goal was the same as with Descent: We're going to create the kind of game we want to play.

"We've been working on *Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War* for two years, longer than the original Descent. And it shows. **The things Descent players will expect are all here:** the best technology, the best A.I., the best physics, great gameplay and the continuous sense of wonder and surprise. It's the kind of experience you can only create when you pour yourselves into your game for a very long time.



Mike Kulas
President of Volition and Designer of the award winning Descent and Descent II

We learned a lot when we wrote the Descent A.I. and we applied all that to *Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War.* It's in a whole new class. **The A.I. system is three times as large,** much deeper and much more flexible. Every ship has its own set of goals it pursues through an environment that is the richest ever. We observed how human players handle complex situations and coded the A.I. to do the same intelligent things.

In *Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War,* everything you do has an important consequence. Not only is the mission branching non-linear, but the choices you make in a mission, such as whether to protect a ship, can have profound consequences. **This offers almost limitless replayability.**

Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War will be the greatest multiplayer space sim ever. In fact, multiplayer code was planned from day one. Plus, we're launching a free matching and tracking service through our website. You'll always be able to find a game on the Internet. And we're going to track games so everyone will know who are the best players in the world.

When *Descent: FreeSpace - The Great War* ships this April, it will do to the space combat market what Descent did to first person shooters. We will have **set the new standard** everyone else will have to measure up to."

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Fallout Creator Moves On

Plans for Fallout 2, *other RPGs won't be affected, Interplay says*

Tim Cain, producer of the highly acclaimed roleplaying game *Fallout*, has decided to leave Interplay and the *Fallout 2* project he had been heading up to pursue his own interests. According to Interplay, the parting was amicable.

Kirk Green, Interplay's director of marketing, said, "He's going out on his own. A lot of time you have producers and artists who reach a certain level and want to go out on their own. It's perfectly natural." To illustrate his point that the parting of ways took place on friendly terms, Green mentioned that Cain gave two weeks notice and spent his final days at Interplay saying his goodbyes and tying up loose ends. If the parting had been unpleasant, Green argues, then Cain would probably have just packed his bags the day he gave notice. Green also dismissed the rumors that had been circulating about a possible legal action being pursued by Interplay against Cain.

The stunningly beautiful *Baldur's Gate* promises deep gameplay for roleplaying devotees.

Feargus Urquhart, the RPG division director, corroborated Green's words. According to Urquhart, Cain had just had enough of the corporate scene and wanted to do something where he had more control of the projects he was working on.

When asked to comment on the matter, Cain responded, "Making *Fallout* was an enlightening if stressful experience, and I learned that enjoying an activity and being good at it are two very separate things. Rather than trying to force myself into a role that I know I will never fit, I am choosing instead to go off in a different direction altogether. I have no specific plans as to what I will do next or where I'll go, but I do plan to stay in the computer game industry and to continue to make quality games."

Which brings us back to *Fallout 2* and how much Cain's departure will have on affect the title. Interplay says that the project is progressing nicely, and that although Cain will be missed, his leaving won't have a major impact. Interplay's optimism probably stems from the fact that the *Fallout 2* team still has quite a few talented members, including lead designer

Continued on page 56:
***See* Interplay**

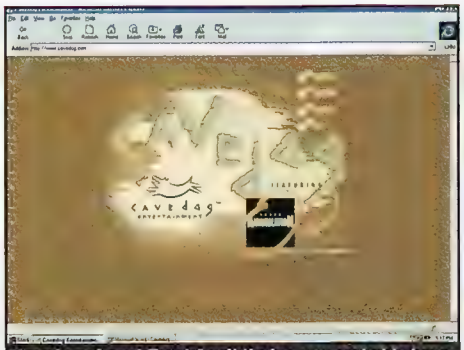
Cavedog's Booming Web Site

Creators of Total Annihilation *use 'net to build community*

Cavedog Entertainment's web site is now the most popular computer game company site on the Internet, according to Hot100, a group that monitors Internet traffic. The site is third overall in Hot100's games category, which includes all gaming sites, and trails only Sony's main PlayStation site and the Imagine Games Network.

The company's unique strategy of offering new, downloadable units for its game *Total Annihilation* on the web site every week has resulted in a huge traffic boost. But there's more to the story than that. Cavedog has successfully used the Internet to build up a loyal base of hardcore fans and a real sense of community among *TA* players.

Although Cavedog, a semi-independent, internal development studio owned by GT Interactive, has only released one game, its site is more popular than most online publications. It has even surpassed official game promo pages like the *Wing Commander Prophecy* site and the web sites of much larger companies, including Cavedog's parent company.



If you're a fan of *Total Annihilation*, you probably have this site near the top of your bookmark list.

So what's the secret behind Cavedog's success? John Uppendahl, Cavedog's director of communications says, "We've designed it to be a highly interactive and responsive site, and we enthusiastically embrace our fans." Uppendahl notes that besides the new game units, Cavedog fans can submit their ideas for the game, post on the message boards, and E-mail the developers.

For competitive reasons, Uppendahl won't say how many staff members he has working full-time on the site, other than to say it's a "lean and mean dedicated team." He feels that what sets Cavedog's site apart from the others is what the team has produced in terms of content for *TA* and how quickly and thoroughly they answer all E-mails.

"A lot of web sites have information and patches, but Cavedog sincerely cares about the quality of the game and supporting our fans " Uppendahl says. For that reason, the site is updated regularly and contains an expansive list of FAQs and technical information.

Continued on page 56:
***See* Cavedog**

Continued from page 48a

day the dreaded Humans arrived and destroyed them. The disbanded Elves formed separate groups, some of which forgave the Humans, while others swore vengeance. *Age of Wonders* will feature 12 races, each with their own unique selection of 14 units. Heroes will play a large part in the game, and both heroes and units will increase their abilities as they gain experience. More than 50 unique magical items and more than 100 spells will be included to uncover during exploration. An easy-to-use scenario editor will let players create their own maps, heroes, and artifacts. As many as six players will be able to compete against one another via hot seat, E-mail, or over a LAN when the game ships in the beginning of the summer.

Return to a time when Elves, Dwarves, Halflings, and monsters roamed the Earth in Epic MegaGames' *Age of Wonders*.

Red Line Racer

Emerging from the beautiful undersea environment of *Sub Culture*, Criterion Studios' next release will put the player behind the handlebars of a speeding motorcycle. With 3D graphics running at 60 frames per second, and a physics-based model that adjusts the feel of the ride depending on the road conditions, *Red Line Racer* should satisfy the two-wheeling crowd. Graphical special effects will abound, with sparks, smoke, rain, fog, blizzards, and real-time lighting effects. You will be able to race on ten tracks set in six diverse environments, and support for 3D sound, force feedback joysticks, and as many as eight participants over a LAN or on the Internet should get your adrenaline pumping when the game is released sometime this spring by Ubi Soft Entertainment.

Continued on page 52

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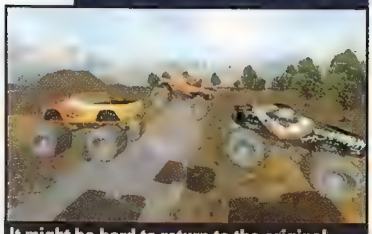
Product Information Number 305

Continued from page 49

Monster Truck Madness 2

After the financial success that the original achieved, was there any doubt that a sequel was on the way? Microsoft's *Monster Truck Madness 2* promises to improve on its parent in every way imaginable. The 3D-accelerated graphics are looking awesome, and AGP support will also be included to pump up the amount of textures that can be used. Force feedback should make for an interesting experience as you crush your opponents into tin cans (which you'll be able to see in all its glory, thanks to the deformable trucks that will show the damage inflicted on them). *MTM2* will feature nine new trucks to race on 12 new tracks, filled with dynamic scenery and variable racing conditions. Multiplayer support on Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone will be provided free of charge when the game is released this spring.



It might be hard to return to the original *Monster Truck Madness* after seeing the graphical splendor of the upcoming sequel.

Leisure Suit Larry's Casino

Sierra is resurrecting one of its most (in)famous characters with *Leisure Suit Larry's Casino*, scheduled for release in May. Players will be able to compete alone against computerized opponents, but to get the full experience, they can connect to Won.net, Sierra's latest gaming site, to interact with their fellow lounge lizards. In addition to the traditional casino games, *Leisure Suit Larry's Casino* will offer its own unique games, such as Group Grope (a group story-writing game), Pick Me Up! (a chance to share your best pick-up lines with the world), and You Don't Know Dick! (a funny definition-writing contest).

PCG

Developers Begin to Gather

Mike Wilson's g.o.d. is starting to take shape

As we reported last issue, Mike Wilson left his position as CEO of Ion Storm to start his own publishing company. His vision was to create a place where the top development houses could unite to combat the control that publishers have over them. Well, what was once just a gleam in Wilson's eye has now become a reality, as several top developers have announced that they will be joining him in his startup venture, Gathering of Developers — or g.o.d. for short. The big names announced so far include 3D Realms, Epic MegaGames, and Ritual Entertainment, with two others waiting in the wings.

As it stands today, publishers are mostly large corporations that dictate release dates and schedules to the small developers who make the games. Much of the blame for inferior products,

from missing features to glaring bugs, can be traced backed to the struggle between the two. Publishers, with their large staffs and hefty payrolls, rarely see past the bottom line, while developers are usually expected to produce miracles to coincide a product's release with quarterly financial statements. Wilson wants to change the current publisher-developer relationship from one where the developer tends to get screwed to one where the game-making talent is recognized and fairly compensated for their efforts. Wilson's motto for g.o.d. is "by the developer and for the developer", and he plans to practice what he preaches.

Besides monetary issues, Wilson feels that the current situation causes a lot of inferior products to end up on the shelves, hurting everyone from the developer, to the publisher, right on down to the customer. He thinks the people making the decisions on what games to ship and when, are fairly clueless when it comes to picking a winner, and are treating games like packaged "product", not unique entertainment offerings. The formation of g.o.d. could go a long way toward remedying this problem, as the board of directors who will be approving the projects will be made up of industry veterans from the development side. Good luck, Mike.

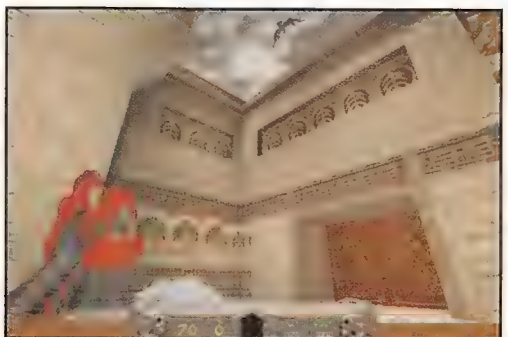
Further Mayhem for *Quake II* and *Hexen II*

New mission packs are already in the works

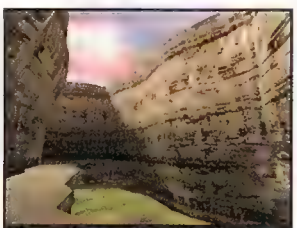
Fans of *Quake II* and *Hexen II* will be happy to know that mission packs are in the works for each of these two hot titles. While release dates have yet to be announced, *PC Gamer* was able to get some information on a few of the features.

No official name has been given to the *Hexen II* project yet, but we do know that it will be developed internally by Raven Software and that Activision will be the publisher. The add-on will not use the *Quake II* technology, however, since the license for *Hexen II* only extended to the original *Quake* engine. Few details regarding the new story line and monsters were available, but it looks like a whole new quasi-historical Asian region has been created for the game's setting.

A bit more is known about the *Quake II* add-on pack, which will go by the name of *Quake II Mission Pack: The Reckoning*. Xatrix Entertainment (creators of Interplay's *Redneck Rampage*) is developing the add-on, and id Software will publish it. Fifteen new missions will let the player lead an elite commando force through an alien city, exploring industrial landscapes, narrow walkways, tight air ducts, and canyons. New weapons, monsters, and specially designed multi-player levels will also be part of the package. A few of the new weapons to be included have been revealed, and they should make deathmatching rather interesting, to say the least. Among them is a plasma accelerator, an energy trap that turns enemies into food cubes for your player's consumption, and a particle shotgun that shoots a "deadly wad" (we won't even speculate what makes up the "deadly wad").



The *Hexen II* mission pack is looking good, considering that it uses the older technology of the original *Quake* engine.



The environments of *The Reckoning* should meet or exceed the standards that *Quake II* fans have come to expect.

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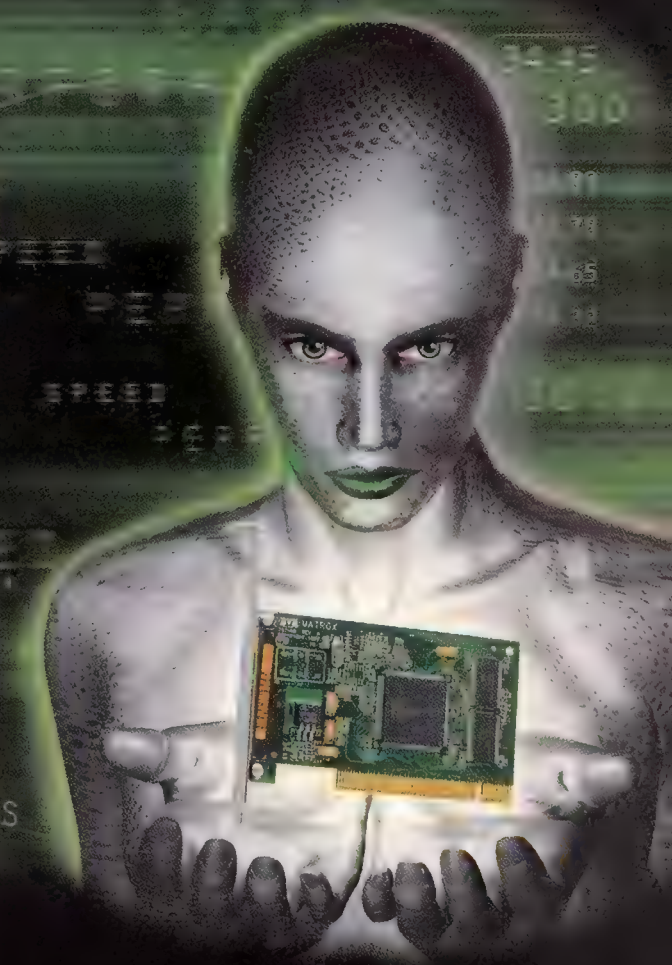

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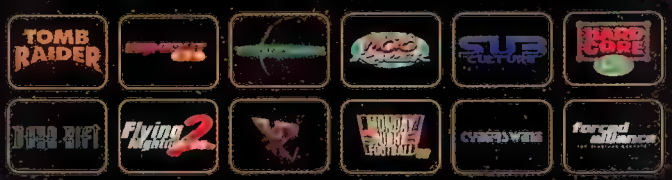

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Product Information Number 241

Roger Wilco Over and Out?

Sierra announces cancellation of SpaceQuest 7

The *SpaceQuest* series of games has come a long way (at least graphically) over the years. Fans are hoping they haven't seen the last of the improvements.

It appears that one of the PC's longest-running adventure game series is being put out to pasture, at least for the foreseeable future. Sierra's first *SpaceQuest* title was released back when EGA was turning gamers' heads with its revolutionary 16-color graphics, and the series had a fairly successful run for five more chapters, gaining a respectable following of dedicated fans.

The news that *SpaceQuest 7* has been put on "indefinite hold" was first released to webmasters of fan sites dedicated to the series. "We had to take a hard look at whether a *SpaceQuest 7* project made sense," the message read in part. "Unfortunately for those of us who love Roger and his stupid antics, other projects just have more to offer, both to the company and to our customers in general at this time." Leslie Balfour and Scott Murphy of the *SpaceQuest 7* team were the bearers of the bad news.

Since the work on *SpaceQuest 7* hadn't progressed to the point where any actual programming had been done, its cancellation shouldn't represent a significant waste. A large percentage of the team members are being transferred over to the "other projects" that were mentioned in the news release — a range of games based on the popular science fiction TV series *Babylon 5*. A space combat game is planned for the end of this year, and an adventure game is in the works for 1999.

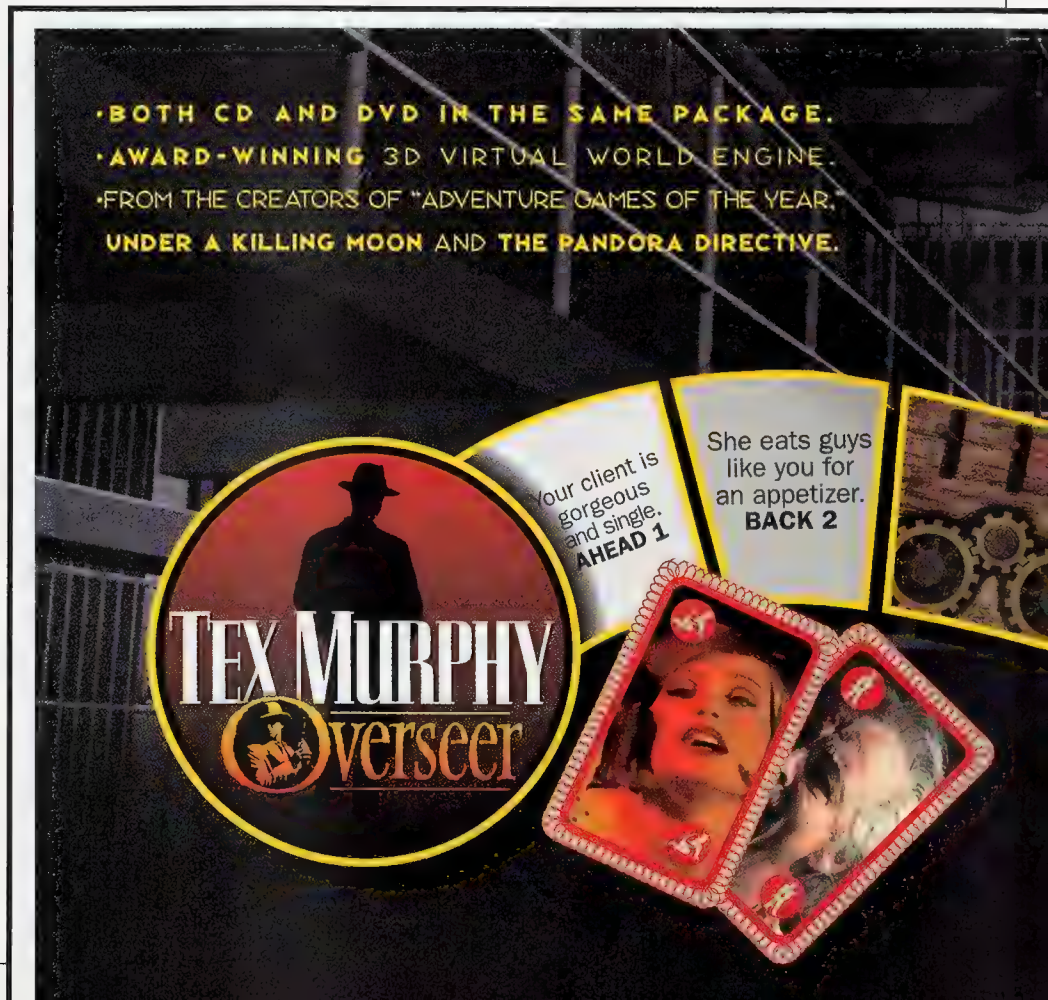
According to Sierra, the continuation of the series just didn't make sense from a financial standpoint. "It's a sales issue," says Monica Moulin, a representative for Sierra. "We looked at the sales history of the series and weren't able to find a business model that worked." She went on to explain that even though Sierra understands the disappointment that will be felt by long-time, loyal fans of the series, game companies have different priorities." The lackluster sales of the recently released *SpaceQuest* anthology also must have played a role in the decision.

Even though Sierra has not ruled out a future *SpaceQuest* product, fans of the series are taking the initiative and are trying to give *SpaceQuest 7* a stay of execution. A "Save *SpaceQuest*" letter-writing campaign has been launched, urging anyone who has fond memories of exploring space in the guise of hero/janitor Roger Wilco, to send off a heartfelt plea to Sierra. For more information, visit the Official Save *SpaceQuest* web site at *www.cpuweb.com/space.*

Egghead Software Closes Up Shop

When the final figures for the third quarter came back showing a net loss of $6 million, executives at Egghead Software made the decision to shut down all of its 80 retail stores, and move exclusively to an Internet business model. The shift will have a direct impact on a lot of people – more than 800 employees are scheduled to be laid off. The transition will not come cheap either. It's expected to take $42 million to cover expenses related to shutting things down, such as providing severance pay and liquidating inventory.

The company will be changing its name to Egghead.com, Inc. to reflect the shift, and George Orban, chairman and CEO, says he's hopeful that the move would bring Egghead back to profitability within two years. The anticipated massive growth of online commerce in the coming years, as well as the recognizable Egghead brand name, are two reasons for the optimism. Another reason lies in the fact that Egghead's existing commerce-based web site has already achieved success with a gain of $9.3 million in sales, and a jump from 300,000 to six million visits over the previous two quarters.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She eats guys like you for an appetizer.
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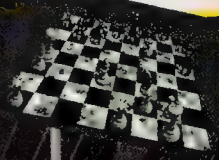
AHEAD 1

The tour guides are trying to kill you.
LOSE A TURN

A chess duel to the death. Now if you could just remember how to move the horsies.
LOSE A TURN



The hitman is back and has a bone to pick... your clavicle.
LOSE 2 TURNS

A mad scientist gives you a wicked brain cramp.
LOSE A TURN

You match wits with a gorilla. Odds are slightly in you favor.
AHEAD 1/2

You bravely cross the Chasm of Death, despite having just eaten 2 macho burritos.
AHEAD 3

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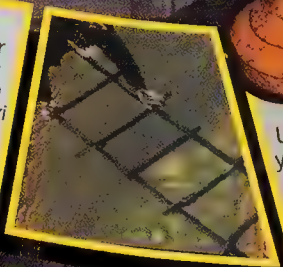

Unfortunately, you left it back at the office.
BACK 1

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Product Information Number 83

News Briefs

3Dfx Comes Up a Double Winner

They must be popping the champagne corks over at 3Dfx. Not only has the company shown a profit for the fourth quarter of 1997 (the first time in its history that it had a profitable quarter), but the Superior Court of Santa Clara County entered an injunction ordering Sega to return to 3Dfx its trade secrets and other confidential information that had been shared under a prior development agreement. Although only a preliminary step, a spokesperson for 3Dfx said, "It's a pretty positive step in dealing with the immediate problem of containing trade secrets."

Compaq to Buy Digital

In the largest acquisition in the history of the computer industry, Digital is to become a wholly owned subsidiary of Compaq. Compaq, whose goal is to become one of the three largest information technology companies in the world, is forking out $4.8 billion in cash and issuing 150 million shares of common stock to pay for the $9.6 billion dollar deal.

Shareholders Sue GT Executives

GT Interactive chairman Joseph J. Cayre, and president & CEO Ron Chaimowitz have been hit with a class-action lawsuit by Kaufman Malchman Kirby & Squire, a law firm representing a group of shareholders. The suit claims, among other charges, that GT released false financial statements to enhance the value of its stock, allowing GT insiders to sell their own shares at artificially enhanced prices and that generally accepted accounting principles were not complied with regarding the company's financial reports.

Red Storm Signs Anne McCaffrey

Red Storm Entertainment, the computer game company co-founded by Tom Clancy, has signed a licensing deal with fantasy/science fiction author Anne McCaffrey to bring her Catteni series of novels to the computer. The Catteni novels depict a conflict between future Earth dwellers and a dangerous alien race hell-bent on enslaving us. McCaffrey is a well-known veteran of the science fiction field, with more than 50 novels to her credit. Best known among these would be her Dragon Riders of Pern books, although that series was not involved in McCaffrey's deal with Red Storm.

Derek Smart Leaves Take 2

Battlecruiser 3000 creator Derek Smart and his longtime publisher Take 2 Interactive have signed a contract agreeing to part ways, Smart said in a statement. According to the statement, Take 2 Interactive gives up all its rights to the game and the franchise while Smart forgoes any and all royalties and claims on Take 2. As part of the agreement, Take 2 will destroy all remaining copies of the game, though individual retailers may continue to offer the original product.

Parallax Software Releases *Descent* Source Code

Parallax Software has released the source code to *Descent*, its groundbreaking 3D shareware game. Along with the code, users are granted a royalty-free license to use the code any way they want, as long as it is for non-commercial purposes. Parallax retains the copyright. When asked why Parallax released the code, company president Mike Kulas said, "We figured a lot of people aspiring to work in the game industry would like to see production-quality code."

MicroProse Sues Activision Over Civilization Name

Following up the story we published in our February issue, MicroProse has filed suit against Activision and The Avalon Hill Game Company. "By bringing this lawsuit, MicroProse is serving notice that it is determined to protect its Civilization brand and intellectual property," said Kip Welch, MicroProse's general counsel. MicroProse contends that Avalon Hill does not own the rights to the Civilization franchise, but that the company that originally developed the Civilization board game, Hartland Trefoil, does. MicroProse purchased Hartland Trefoil earlier this year, soon after the Avalon Hill/Activision agreement.

The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

Worms 2 landed in our office this month, and made quite an impression. Believe it or not, this silly little 2D game with goofy weapons like the Old Lady, Napalm Strike, and the infamous cluster bomb proved to be so popular it even challenged *Quake II* as *PC Gamer*'s number one LAN game! Each staffer soon developed his own tactics — Joel astounded all with his incredible ability to manipulate the Ninja rope while Jason's tactic of burrowing his worms to safety was widely disparaged and scorned. Gary favored the dreaded air, napalm, and mail strikes, wiping out opponents en masse while Billy used his usual mixed bag of bland tricks. But it was Mike Wolf's widespread abuse of the "cluster bomb on the head" technique that drew the greatest outcry — it is a despicable tactic that even the game's creators, Team 17, called "cowardly," even going so far as to release a patch to eliminate the ploy. Wolf, your days are numbered, you pansy-ass.

1.	*Worms 2*	Everybody
2.	*Quake II CTF*	Everybody
3.	*Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith*	Joel, Mike L.
4.	*Grand Theft Auto*	Gary, Bill
5.	*F-22 ADF*	Dan, Todd
6.	*Nightmare Creatures*	Billy
7.	*Fallout*	Mike W., Jason
8.	*Blade Runner*	Rob
9.	*Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*	Quintin, Dean
10.	*Flying Corps Gold*	Joel, Dan

Interplay

Continued from page 49

Chris Taylor (designer of the first *Fallout*), and Zeb Cook, a long-time veteran of the roleplaying scene who had previously worked at TSR (of *Dungeons & Dragons* fame).

The RPG division at Interplay, called Black Isle, is one of the biggest assets that Interplay has, according to Green. The group, consisting of around 50 people, has several projects planned above and beyond *Fallout 2*. The furthest along of the bunch is *Baldur's Gate*, a title set in TSR's Forgotten Realms universe. Another game based on a TSR license will take place in the Planescape universe, a dark, violent world with a gothic theme. Finally, there's *Stonekeep 2*, the follow-up to a game that had one of the longest production cycles in Interplay's history.

Cavedog

Continued from page 49

It's this kind of attention to detail, Uppendahl says, that builds a loyal and vocal fan base.

So while other companies are routinely flamed on the Internet, Cavedog's site shows how game developers can use the 'net to interact directly and regularly with gamers, building up brand recognition and consumer loyalty.

While pleased with the site's current ranking, Uppendahl says it's unlikely that Cavedog will go more heavily onto the 'net and try to follow Westwood and Blizzard by launching its own full-blown, Internet gaming service. "There are a number of services doing a great job of that already," he says, adding that Cavedog is content to have *TA* playable on TEN, Mplayer, and the other existing services.

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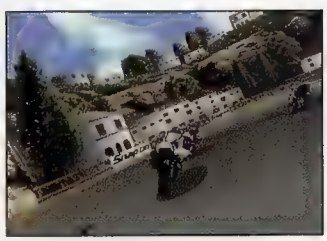

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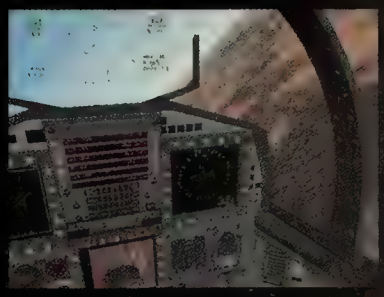
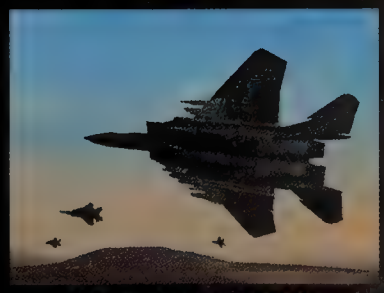
F-15

THE DEFINITIVE JET COMBAT SIMULATOR





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Product Information Number 372

Des

It's been more than two years since Westwood first hinted at these fearsome GDI mechs, and now they're coming close to completion. At more than 18 feet tall, they're the only units in the game that can fire over walls.

Countdown to truction

Westwood Studios prepares to drop a bombshell on the competition with the sequel everyone has been waiting for — Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun.

As the creators of some of the PC's best-loved games, Westwood Studios has proven it has what it takes to develop hit after hit — but despite great work in so many different genres, the company is still best-known for its blockbusting *Command & Conquer* series of games. The company practically invented the real-time strategy game with its groundbreaking *Dune II*, and *C&C* cemented its domination of the genre with a game that many

BY TODD VAUGHN

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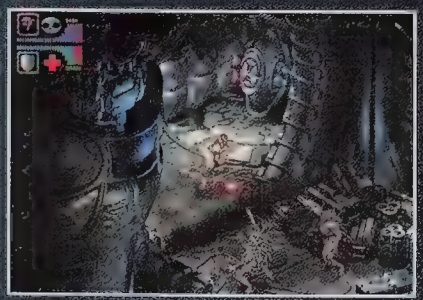

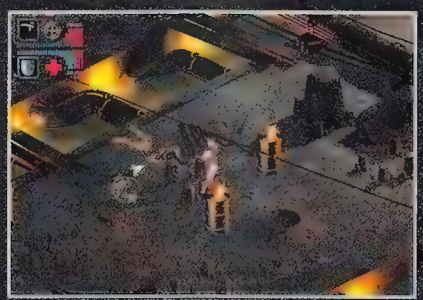

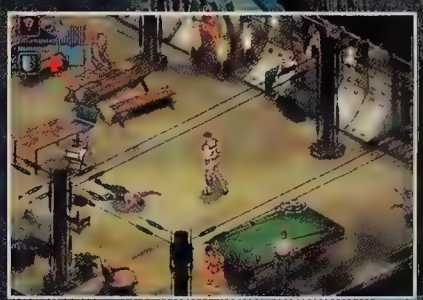

PC CD-ROM

ALIENEARTH

PLAY IT BEFORE IT PLAYS YOU.

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This explosive battle scene shows GDI mammoth tanks squaring off against a complement of NOD hover tanks. Note the massive explosion as the bridge blows and crashes down onto the scenery below. Very cool.

have since imitated, but few have equalled.

Now, little more than a year after the release of the awesome *Command & Conquer* "prequel" *Red Alert*, Westwood is finally ready to go the whole hog and give gamers what they've been crying out for ever since *C&C* first set store shelves alight — a full-blown sequel.

PC Gamer was invited behind the scenes at Westwood's Las Vegas headquarters where project leader (and original *Command & Conquer* creator) Erik Yeo's hand-picked team is currently assembling the game in such secrecy that many Westwood employees still have not seen it in action.

Anyone who played the original *Command & Conquer* will recall the brief, tantalizing trailer at the end of the game advertising *Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun*. A collection of pre-rendered animations showing GDI mechs blowing up NOD buildings and laying waste to enemy vehicles, those few flickering images were more than enough to get gamers salivating for more. Yet, during the past couple of years, we've heard very little about *Tiberian Sun*, as Westwood concentrated its efforts on *Red Alert*, various expansion packs, and spin-offs like *Sole Survivor*.

But as we caught up with Erik Yeo, Westwood's senior game designer and leading light for the *C&C* series, we learned that the delay wasn't for a lack of effort — the game design has been in the works since before the original *C&C* was released — it was merely the ongoing success of the brand that kept *Tiberian Sun* on the back burner until now.

Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun takes place more than twenty years after the dramatic finale of *C&C*, as the player rejoins the fight between the imperialistic Global Defense Initiative (GDI) and the hard-core revolutionaries that form the Brotherhood of NOD. But a lot has changed in those few years.

Fed by the plentiful organic material found in the Earth's temperate zones, the mysterious and plentiful resource Tiberium has expanded at an alarming rate. After turning a deaf ear to warnings of the possible side effects of prolonged exposure to Tiberium years earlier, the horrific effects of Tiberium mutation have forced the GDI to evacuate much of the population to arctic settlements to avoid contamination.

Meanwhile, the Brotherhood of NOD, already dealt a serious blow after the apparent loss of its charismatic leader Kane, seeks refuge from the Tiberium in subterranean caves. Without Kane to guide them, the NOD have become fragmented and factionalized — and even more dangerous than before.

As the story progresses, the NOD begin to experiment with Tiberium, looking for ways to enhance its population of elite troops and enlisted personnel through genetic mutation while the GDI fights to maintain order in the remaining habitable land. Caught in the middle are the victims of the Tiberium scourge — mutants neglected by the GDI and abused by the NOD. They call themselves The Forgotten. And so, a new generation of global conflict begins...

New from the ground up

It only takes a quick look at the screen shots on these pages to see that *Tiberian Sun* looks substantially different from its predecessors. The slightly skewed top-down perspective of earlier *C&C* games has been replaced with an attractive isometric view to show off the engine's most impressive and most noticeable new feature — variable 3D terrain.

This new approach to landscaping isn't just for looks. Players are now able to deform or destroy much of the environment, allowing them to employ innovative new tactics. Since certain obstacles can be traversed both over and under, players are able to blow up vehicles rolling across bridges and watch the fireworks as they crash down on units under the bridge. Real-world

With several decades of technological research under its belt, hovering vehicles like this MSRV complement the GDI's massive force of mammoth tanks and infantry.

While not nearly as impressive as the tower of NOD these automated laser cannons can keep the GDI at bay.

physics have been applied where appropriate, allowing for realistic effects for certain weapons. For example, grenades will now bounce and roll, based on the type of slope or obstacle they hit.

While the three-dimensional terrain allows the designers more freedom in the types of maps they create and will give players a few more tactics, Erik Yeo says features such as line-of-sight and elevation advantages probably won't make it into *C&C 2* due to balancing and playability issues. "It's something we considered, but I had a real problem with it because it is such a nebulous advantage," he says. "When you play a game like *C&C* or chess, you know what each unit is and what they do and you use them in a certain way based on that knowledge. But, suddenly when you move up higher you don't have that simplicity any more. You know it's different, you just don't know how different.

We're still wrestling with the idea, but we're looking for ways to make the advantage obvious to the player.

"Instead, one of the biggest things we focused on was changing the terrain and what you can do with it. On a river for example, you'll have ice begin to grow across the water, and over the passage of time, the ice will completely solidify; you'll actually be able to drive vehicles across it. Vehicles that normally couldn't cross water will be able to cross — if you're willing to wait long enough."

With a new system for upgrades in place, buildings like this communications center can be enhanced by adding an upgrade to one of the available pods.

Lights, voxels, and the new units

Sporting 16-bit high-color Super VGA graphics, *Tiberian Sun* will feature several effects that will immerse the player even deeper into C&C universe. Colored lighting effects now allow the designers to place lights throughout the map for moody nighttime missions. Like the rest of the objects in the game, these lights can be destroyed — in missions where stealth is required, players can knock out the lights inside an enemy base to blind its defenses prior to launching an assault.

To animate the units properly as they roll across the new 3D terrain, the programmers came up with a way to use voxels ("volume pixels" — pixels with height, width, and length) to render vehicles in three dimensions instead of using bitmap sprites as in the previous games. The voxel technology also allows the designers to animate the units in ways that weren't possible in previous C&C games. For example, as mammoth tanks target vehicles on higher ground, the turrets will rotate and pitch up at the proper angle and once a shot is fired, the tank will roll slightly from the recoil of its massive guns. The voxel-rendering technique also makes realistic damage effects possible. When certain vehicles take damage, they'll lose certain components in the fight, but they'll still be able to limp home, spewing sparks and smoke the entire way.

Speaking of units, Yeo has some pretty tasty designs up his sleeve for the new types of troops and vehicles you'll get to control in *Tiberian Sun*. Among the new array of weaponry at your disposal will be jetpacking infantry, three types of Orca helicopters (fighter, bomber, and troop transport), a walking "mech"-style tank (the only unit capable of firing over walls), a sonic boom-blasting "disruptor" tank, hovercraft tanks, and even subterranean "mole" tanks and APCs that can drill underground and emerge in the center of an enemy installation!

The way in which these units are handled is now a lot more detailed too, as Yeo

Since the NOD have always favored stealth and surprise, this tunneling tank should prove to be a deadly asset.

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Product Information Number 303

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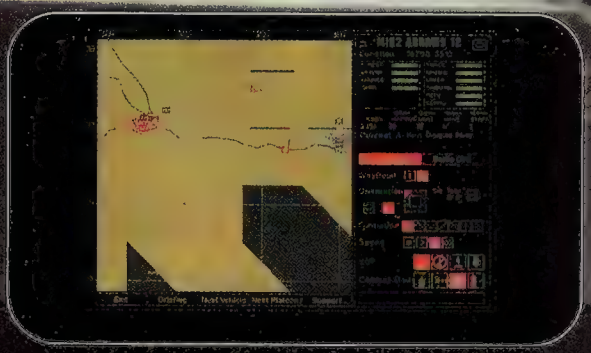

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Product Information Number 150

One of *Tiberian Sun*'s impressive new units, the GDI's massive "Disruptor" tank fires a devastating ultrasonic wave which literally shakes its target to pieces.

Command & Conquer 2 features not one but three different types of GDI Orca helicopter. On the left is the fast-moving fighter, on the right the heavy bomber, and at center screen the troop transport.

explains. "Vehicles can go up in experience as they destroy units, based on what type of unit they are and what they've destroyed. They gain new abilities, better armor, better sight range, and in some cases they go up in intelligence. For example, your infantry units can go up in rank and reach sergeant status, and as a result, they begin to think for themselves. When they're attacked they'll auto-scatter to avoid getting killed. They'll also affect the other units around them, so if a sergeant is standing in a cluster of regular infantry and comes under attack, as he begins to scatter he'll yell at all the other units around him `Come on, move, move, move!'"

Harvesters will be smarter as well, warning players when there is no available Tiberium in a safe zone. If a harvester is mistakenly sent to a hostile area, it won't stupidly wander into danger as before, but will warn the player that it's entered a dangerous area and begin to move back. However, the player can elect to override the harvester to make it harvest this new cache of Tiberium, despite the risk to the unit.

Along with smarter harvesters and experienced units, new abilities have been extended to some of the more traditional single-use units from *C&C*, like the APC, which can dig in and entrench itself, increasing its firepower and range. The trade-off for the increased firepower is lower mobility, making it an easy target for enemy forces.

One big surprise is that there will be no naval units in *Tiberian Sun*. "I would play *Red Alert* and found that naval units really segmented the board, especially in multi-player games," Yeo says. "So instead of having naval units, we have the hovercraft vehicles like hover APC and the hover MRS which aren't restrained by terrain or water — in effect, the ability to strike from the water is still there, but you're not hemmed in by taking that approach. It helps balance the game because it eliminates those situations where you're unable to finish an opponent off because they have one unit sitting out in the ocean where you can't reach it."

While the process of building structures and gathering resources hasn't changed much from the original *Command & Conquer*, players will find that many of the fool-proof building techniques they used in the original game simply won't work in *Tiberian Sun*. "In the balancing of this game, we're getting back to the philosophy that you won't get much of a bonus from having multiple buildings," Yeo says. "Mainly what you get when you build an additional war factory is a new place for units to appear." This new design approach should effectively render benign the more boring play styles of previous C&C games, like the "tank rush" tactic, while encouraging more inventive strategies that employ a mix of different units and tactics.

Players who like to build, build, build should be kept happy, however, by *Tiberian Sun*'s new system of modular construction. Basically, once a new building is in place, it can be upgraded and improved by fitting extra components into various pods built into the structure. So, for example, a basic Com-

With multi-colored lights illuminating the way for these NOD troops, this night-time mission shows off the impressive new colored lighting effects that are available in *Tiberian Sun*.

Before each mission, you'll be given a briefing by a loyal servant known as a mentat. This briefing takes place inside an Atreides field tent.

Dune 2000: Rebuilding a Dynasty

With its groundbreaking debut in 1992, Westwood Studios' *Dune II: The Building of a Dynasty* introduced the computing world to the real-time strategy genre for the first time. Prior to its release, the notion of resource management, combat, and construction were concepts that most gamers thought could only be played out in turns, but thanks to its fluid action, careful design, and addictive gameplay, *Dune II* sparked a revolution that shows no sign of slowing down.

Loosely based on Frank Herbert's well-known science-fiction saga *Dune*, *Dune II* was more than just a starting point for a new genre, it was also a top-notch production that seamlessly blended the book's themes of warring houses and mercenary fighters with thought-provoking strategy and skillfully balanced units. It is a testament to Westwood's design that several of the features pioneered in *Dune II* are still found in current real-time games, such as point-and-click unit selection, building upgrades, and scrollable view screen. For its time, *Dune II* was nothing short of revolutionary, but by today's standards the multi-step interface, chunky graphics, and simple missions seem horribly out of date.

Now, more than six years after *Dune II*'s release, Westwood Studios is putting the finishing touches to *Dune 2000*, a remake of the classic strategy game, and hopes to release it in April. Westwood is quick to point out that *Dune 2000* is not a sequel to *Dune II*, but a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The warring forces of the Atreides Harkonnen and Ordos will be fighting once again this April in *Dune 2000*

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

remake of the original designed to offer a new generation of gamers the chance to enjoy the classic game with all the benefits that modern technology has to offer.

According to Westwood, everything from the story line to the unit art is being carefully scrutinized to ensure that *Dune 2000* mixes the best of the past with the present. Some of the new features such as the built-in multi-player mode will give *Dune 2000* abilities the original never had while other features, such as the gorgeous high-resolution art, simply give the game a new modern look. And as with the C&C series, *Dune 2000*'s story line will be told through a combination of filmed cinematic sequences and computer-generated animations.

Though it shares the same intuitive interface and design doctrine as *C&C* and *Red Alert*, *Dune 2000* isn't based on an existing engine. To ensure that none of the classic appeal of *Dune II* would be lost in the translation, the technology behind *Dune 2000* was built entirely from scratch. This new engine is also something of a knockout. Though it doesn't have the 3D terrain or isometric perspective of *Tiberian Sun*, *Dune 2000* will feature 16-bit high color graphics, which will allow for advanced features such as colored and dynamic lighting and translucent smoke and haze effects.

Overall, we were impressed with the care and attention Westwood is lavishing on its old classic, and while we'll have to wait and see if the remake of one of our old favorites lives up to its name when it ships in April, we'll be the first in line to see it again... for the first time.

The dark industrial corridors of the Harkonnen construction yard are home to the Harkonnen

As mammoth tanks close on a GDI base a squad of mechs attempts to head them off before too much damage is done. This screen also showcases more of the cool dynamic lighting effects.

munications Center could have extra components added to enable greater radar coverage and threat-assessment capabilities. "I've always liked the concept of upgrades," Yeo says, "but I never liked the idea of a linear path for upgrades where you had to build a particular item before you could get another item. So we've completely re-thought the idea of upgrades, and now they're much more flexible and can be combined in different ways to accentuate each other."

The cinematics are back

In the grand tradition of *Command & Conquer* and *Red Alert*, the grim story line for *C&C 2: Tiberian Sun* will unfold through the use of computer-generated animations and full-motion video clips, but there are a few interesting new twists this time around. For starters, this time round the player's character (either GDI or NOD) will appear in the movies, giving the player a much stronger connection to the plot line than before. This addition is more than just a new hook to keep you from skipping straight to the next mission — as the leader of the battles, you'll have the option to choose how each mission unfolds.

"In *C&C 2* we've abandoned the talking-head briefings of the original game — now they are purely story oriented," Yeo says. "You'll come out of a mission, and everybody on screen, including EVA (the game's AI persona) will tell you what happened while you were away in battle, and you have to react to that. From there, the player goes to this big holographic map where there are usually several choices for the next mission. Unlike the options in *C&C*, these choices impact each other now. You may get a mission where you need to go and take out this one particular guy or take out a base. If you take that mission right off the bat, it will be really hard, but EVA will suggest another mission that will allow you to hit the resupply lines for the base, and when you return to that mission, the reinforcements won't be there, making the mission that much easier. It's a longer route, but it tends to be an easier route, and it allows the player to decide the difficulty level for themselves as they go through the game."

The version of *Tiberian Sun* that we saw in action at Westwood was early, and there are still plenty of tweaks and design decisions to be made. But right now, the signs are promising indeed. Encouragingly, the design team decided not to re-invent the wheel, so while so many other wannabe real-time strategy games are struggling to stand out from the crowd with elaborate new viewing modes and unnecessarily complex gameplay "enhancements," Westwood looks to be staying true to the formula that put them at the top of the real-time tree. It's a tough balance to get right; a sequel which remains faithful to the gameplay that made the original great while adding enough new stuff to make it a whole new game. But based on what we've seen, we predict that *Tiberian Sun* is going to keep the millions of *Command & Conquer* junkies across the world happy indeed when it releases at the end of this year. Can you wait?

PCG

The Brotherhood of NOD's infamous Stealth Tank makes a welcome return in *Tiberian Sun*. (Welcome to everyone but the GDI, that is.)

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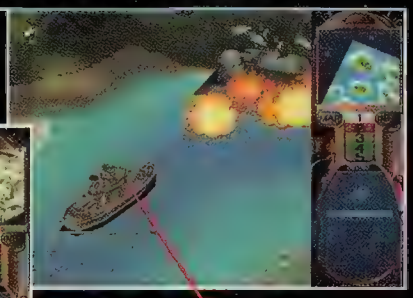

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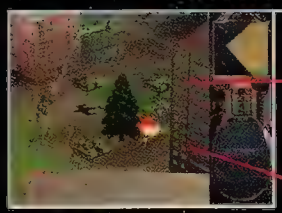

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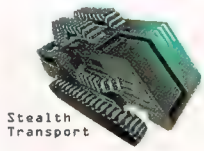

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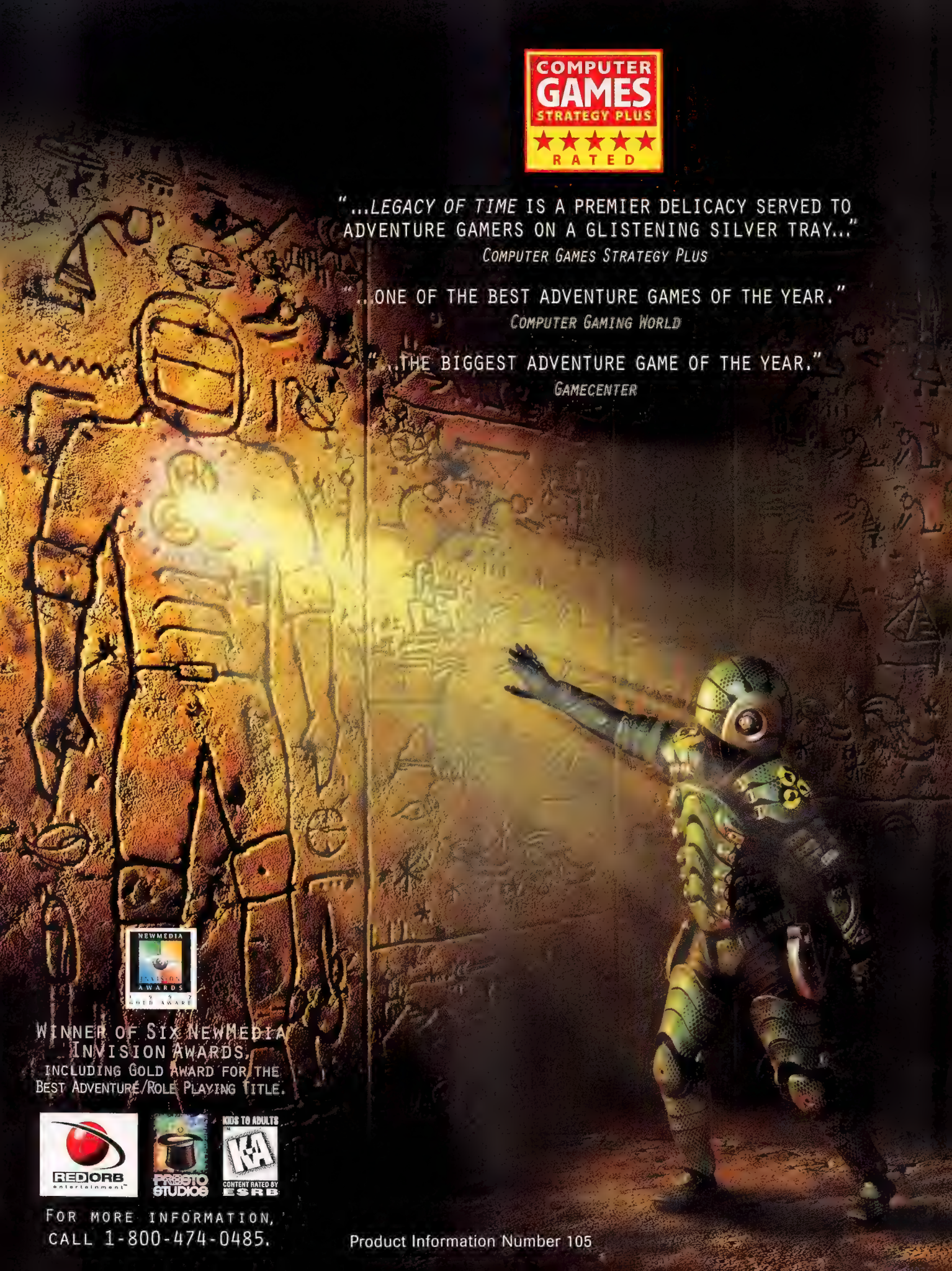
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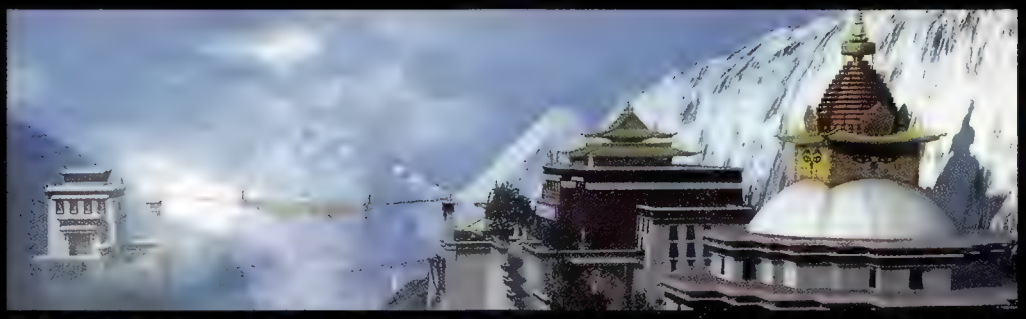

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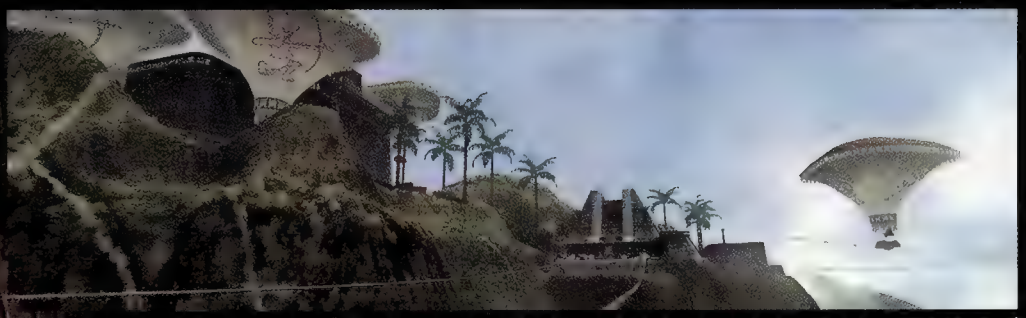

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DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!

Good evening everybody, you're tuned to PCGSN, the PC Gamer Sports Network: all PC sports, all the time. On tonight's broadcast, our experts take an analytical look at the upcoming baseball season, and offer their predictions for the big winners among the virtual boys of summer in 1998. And now, live from our studio in San Francisco, it's over to our anchormen William Harms and Gary Whitta...

"Hi, I'm Gary Whitta."

"And I'm William 'Tank' Harms. And this... is PCGSN. Tonight, we answer the question: Will 1998 be the best season ever for PC baseball games, or just another also-ran? Our correspondents have been cross-country to visit the developers of the biggest-name games in the sporting world. Whatever they've found, one thing's for sure, Gary — 1998 is poised to be an explosive year for the national past-time."

"I couldn't agree more, 'Tank.' Looking back on 1997, we saw signs of some significant changes in many areas of PC baseball. Now those changes look set to come into play. Last season, for instance, we saw the first seeds of much-needed changes in Sierra's Front Page Sports: Baseball line. Gamers have been crying out for changes in this series of games for the past few years, and now it seems as though they're finally going to get it as Sierra's heavy-hitting series goes into the '99 season with a renewed sense of purpose. Meanwhile, as I'm sure all of us will remember, last season also brought the announcement of Microsoft's entry into the sport with an ambitious 3D-accelerated simulation. It will debut this year, and I, like a lot of fans, can't wait to see what they'll be bringing to this party."

"And then, of course, there is the EA Sports story."

"That's right, Bill. Over the past few seasons, EA Sports has emerged as the World Champions of the PC baseball scene with its action-packed Triple Play series, and going into the '99 season, they look unstoppable. This will be a pivotal year for them, and fans who felt some of the changes in the '98 season weren't significant will be looking for more this year."

"Thanks Gary. Tonight we have a live report from inside the top-secret EA Sports and Microsoft camps, along with many other in-depth previews from the world of PC baseball. We begin tonight with that other big story — the strategic shake-ups over at Sierra. Todd Vaughn has been following the story, and he reports now live from Sierra Sports camp in Phoenix, Arizona. Todd?"

SIERRA SPORTS BASEBALL PRO '99

Welcome to BOB (Bank One Ballpark) in Phoenix, AZ. Even at this early stage, the stadiums are looking phenomenal in *Sierra Sports Baseball Pro '99*.

PCGSN LIVE REPORT
TODD VAUGHN — PHOENIX, AZ

"Thank you, Bill. Since its introduction in 1994, Sierra's baseball title (formerly known as *Front Page Sports Baseball Pro*) has been plagued with problems. Gameplay and statistical bugs, along with the fact that the arcade play just didn't measure up to its competitors, has kept what should have been the ultimate baseball simulation from dominating the field.

"But all that could be about to change, since Sierra is getting serious about making sure its sports titles aren't just a rehash of the previous year's model. From an early look at *Sierra Sports Baseball Pro '99* (note the name change), this could be the year that fans get the complete game they've been wanting.

"The most important move Sierra made was signing developer Rainbow Studios. The team is dedicated to fixing the problems with the statistical gameplay, while adding some hot arcade action for joystick jockeys. More than 50 playtesters have been working on the game's engine, finding every little inconsistency or inaccuracy, and all of the features that made FPS the choice for serious baseball fans, like the career mode and the physics-based gameplay, are being kept and improved upon.

"The artificial intelligence is being reworked, so fielding and base running will be realistically portrayed. The time it takes to have the computer simulate a season will be improved upon as well, with the development team shooting for a goal of under three hours for a 28-team, 162-game season, while retaining statistical accuracy.

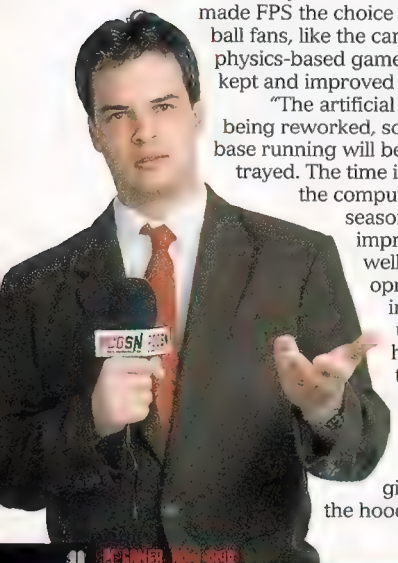
"After digging around under the hood to make sure the engine is sound, a complete overhaul to the interface, graphics, and overall presentation was the next project for Rainbow. Fans of the series will be pleasantly surprised to notice that this game will look *nothing* like its predecessors. Gone are the tiny players on featureless fields. Gone is the cryptic interface. Gone is the boring and repetitive announcer.

The new interface is both easier to use and much more attractive. Fans of the old Front Page Sports look will find more to like here.

"Play-by-play and color commentary will be provided by Arizona Cardinals (and soon to be Arizona Diamondbacks) announcer Tom Dillion, and great care is being taken to make the commentary accurate and diverse, rather than something you want to shut off after several games. All of the major league parks will be recreated in photo-realistic detail, and support for 3D cards will be included, although not required. Major league players Brian McRae and Steve Trachsel have been drafted to don the sensor-suit at Rainbow's in-house motion capture studio, and the examples I've seen have been impressive. Another area that the developer is concentrating on is the camera angles that are used throughout a game. While the old CAMS system was a good idea in theory, nothing replaces the artistry of a TV camera crew working a game, and this is the effect that the Rainbow team is shooting for.

"There are many other small touches that will be added to round out the experience. Special effects will include bats breaking when players get jammed, real-time scoreboards, and post-game celebrations. For those gamers with top of the line audio systems, there will be support for Dolby Pro Logic surround sound. With an Internet connection, you'll even be able to get a continuous live feed of sports scores displayed while you play.

"With so much competition on the way, Sierra was wise to choose this year to radically revamp its baseball series. If what I've seen down here is any indication, I'd predict that *Sierra Sports Baseball Pro '99* will be a strong contender for the pennant this season. But it won't be the *only* contender, if Microsoft has anything to say about it. Joel Durham has more on that story in our next report."



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****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
JOEL DURHAM — SEATTLE, WA

"I'm here outside the Microsoft training camp in Seattle, where the big news is *Microsoft Baseball 3D*. First shown at last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta, *Baseball 3D* may only be a rookie, but many experts think it will have a crackerjack first season in the majors. After several delays, this title is entering the final stages of production and should be released near the start of the season. The extra time being taken should help improve what already looked like a standout title in Atlanta.

"Even before 3D accelerators were considered a 'must have' item for PC gaming, *Microsoft Baseball 3D* was being built from the get-go to take advantage of the power boost they give. Gamers out there that haven't gotten around to adding this component to their systems need not apply; *Baseball 3D* will *require* an accelerator. The advantage of taking this highbrow stance is that no compromises need to be made when it comes to the game's graphical splendor, and from what I've seen, this was the right choice.

"Taking its cue from Sierra's entry this year, *Baseball 3D* will have a true physics-based model, taking into account such things as elevation, ball spin, weather, and wind to determine play outcomes, rather than relying on strict number-crunching to produce statistical results. Unfortunately, another key element in Sierra's title, a career mode, will not be part of the game.

"Although it's now becoming commonplace, when Microsoft showed an early version of the game with real faces texture-mapped onto the polygon players, it caused some excitement. Even though *Baseball 3D* is not the only game in town touting this feature anymore, the quality of the work here is outstanding. Motion-capture is another area in sports games that is becoming ubiquitous, but again, *Baseball 3D* hopes to outdo the competition by including some *500* different moves to add variety and realism to the proceedings.

"*Baseball 3D* promises a few other features that will add to the fun. 3D ambient sound should give the game a much better aural atmosphere, allowing for things like players hearing the umpire's call coming from behind them when they're at the plate. Support for force feedback joysticks will give batting a whole new dimension; imagine feeling the impact of a Randy Johnson fastball as it makes contact with your bat! Another feature to be included is the use of special "combination moves" of the kind seen in fighting games to pull off spectacular plays, such as making a difficult throw or an acrobatic catch. If this feature works as intended, it could become a standard for all sports games in the future.

"With Microsoft's big bucks behind it, developer WizBang! has a chance to make a name for itself with its initial foray into the big, bad world of computer baseball. Having seen the game in development, I am expecting great things.

"This is Joel Durham in rainy Seattle handing you over to Lisa Renninger in sunny California."

You'll have no problem distinguishing your favorite players in *Microsoft Baseball 3D*. Here we get up close and personal with Marquis Grissom.

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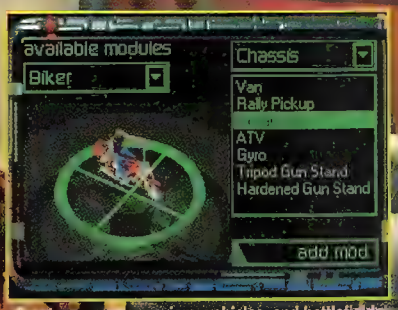

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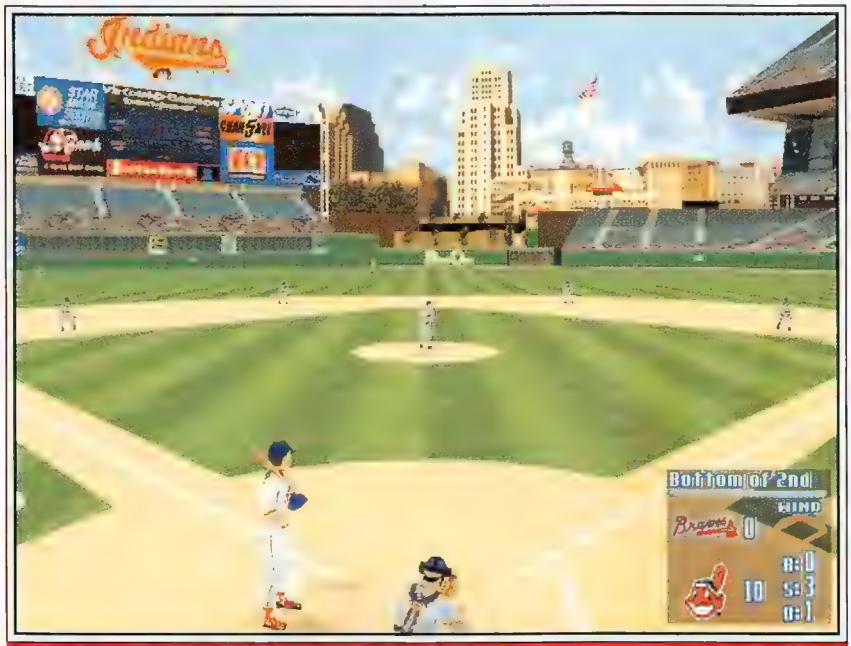
ACCOLADE HARDBALL 6



The size of the players in relation to the stadiums is a major improvement over last year's model.

PCGSN LIVE REPORT
LISA RENNINGER — SAN JOSE, CA

"Yes Joel, the sun is shining down here in San Jose, where Accolade is preparing to unleash the sixth update of its classic HardBall series.

"If any game series can be called a true veteran of the computer baseball wars, HardBall is it — the original was a hot title during the old days of the Commodore 64! A decade later, the series is still going strong, and *HardBall 6* is looking to do its 8-bit granddaddies proud.

"To show how serious Accolade is this time around, for the first time in its history, the HardBall series will have the full Major League Baseball license. This means the end of fictional team names, and will allow the players to sport authentic team logos.

"The engine has been redesigned to incorporate hardware acceleration for 3Dfx. Direct 3D will be supported out of the box, but unlike Microsoft's game, a 3D card will not be mandatory. Accolade promises that the motion-captured polygon players will fit into the game world much better than the giant sprites that inhabited the fields of *HardBall 5*, which should do much to help the game achieve a realistic appearance. A variety of player types and animations are promised to avoid a cookie-cutter look on the field, although they will remain somewhat generic since there will be no texture-mapping of player faces.

"From the very beginning, the HardBall series has always put arcade play first. But that trend has slowly been changing, and with *HardBall 6*, the simulation side will be given just as much attention. The most exciting addition to the simulation model will be consecutive season play, a feature that has been curiously absent in all but Sierra's baseball games. The age of a player will now have a direct affect on his abilities, so young players will improve as they mature and, after a certain point, will start to lose their stamina and skill as they near retirement. A minor league draft will let you fill in the gaps on your team with promising young talent between seasons, and the amount of improvement they show will be based on the playing time they receive in the majors, making for some tough managerial choices. For you commissioners out there, a schedule generator will let you set up customized season for any number of teams from 2 to 30 and any number of games up to 162.

"Enhancements to the arcade play have not been overlooked either. An all new fielding model will let players execute a variety of plays, such as diving in any direction, jumping up to snag line drives or rob home runs, and even includes ways to show off your talent like making a basket catch. The baserunning has also been reworked to improve control in this area. The batting model will now feature situational hitting, letting you have some control of whether you want to put the ball in the air or on the ground, and whether you want to try and pull the ball or go the opposite way.

"In my opinion, though, *HardBall 6* has a difficult job ahead of it. Most gamers tend to regard the series as a light arcade game, short on statistical accuracy. If Accolade can improve the arcade play, while also doing justice to the simulation side as promised, the HardBall series may find a whole new audience. To succeed, *Hardball 6* is going to have to go head-to-head with the current champion of baseball sims, EA Sports' Triple Play. For a full report on the latest from EA, we go live to Robert Smolka, who's just up the road in San Mateo. Rob?"

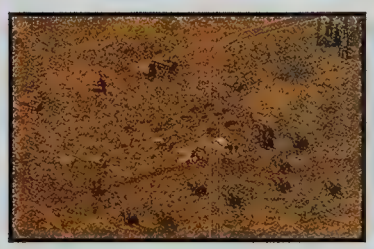
One of the most exciting moments in baseball, the play at the plate, should be well represented with *HardBall 6's* new 3D engine.

The Teeth Clenching Action Continues!

COMING SOON!

Clash between Romanian and Russian armor.

Finnish ski troops attacking a Russian column.



Polish cavalry attack German panzers.

Actual screens may vary.

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if they can't hit me.
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is for SUCKERS with small JOHNsons.
All I need are 3 solar collectors and
MAXIMUM SHIELD WALLS
Oh yeah, and about a dozen RAMMING spikes.
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EA SPORTS

TRIPLE PLAY 99

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
ROBERT SMOLKA — SAN MATEO, CA

"Thanks Lisa. Well, if you want to be immersed in the sights and sounds of Major League Baseball, the Triple Play series from EA Sports is, without a doubt, your best choice. Focusing heavily on action and atmosphere — and doing a damn good job of it — is a trademark of almost every title in EA Sports' lineup, with hard-core realism and statistical accuracy taking a back seat. With more multimedia flash than ever, last year's *Triple Play 98* won over a legion of action-oriented baseball fans, but alienated many stat-heads in the process.

"I'm here at the EA Sports camp in San Mateo to look at *Triple Play 99*, and my overriding impression is that things don't look much different this time around, with the emphasis centering squarely on arcade playability. There does appear to have been *some* concession toward fleshing out the simulation side of things however, with the inclusion of a career mode. Other improvements to the simulation aspect will come in the form of improved artificial intelligence (although how much it has been improved remains questionable at this stage), and varying weather conditions that will affect ball physics. Managerial play over the Internet will also be supported.

"For all its limitations as a simulation, the Triple Play line has always succeeded on the basis of its arcade fun factor. Here again, things don't look much different, as *Triple Play 99* figures to improve upon and add many new features that should make it a front runner in its field.

"Fans will be happy to see 3D accelerator support included for the first time, cleaning up the angular polygons of last year. A new first-person batting perspective will be an option, too. The designers say that this option was put in to appease players who found the game too easy. All new animations, such as throwing from the knees, headfirst slides, and scaling the wall should up the realism factor on the field. And the beautiful stadiums of last year will be prettier than ever thanks a team of graphic artists who have been travelling cross-country, attending games at every major league stadium to take photographs and obtain blueprints, making sure the details of each 'virtual stadium' are spot-on.

"Also returning will be the exceptional work in the broadcast booth by Jim Hughson and Buck Martinez, a feature that added mightily to the appeal of last year's version. New dialog has been recorded, and the color commentary will no longer be the canned phrases that we've become accustomed to. Buck, the color man, will incorporate updated statistics and player names into his banter, which should heighten the illusion of an actual television broadcast.

"*Triple Play 99's* motto of 'Real Baseball – All Highlights' should give you a good idea of what the guys at EA Sports are shooting for. If statistical accuracy is a crucial factor in your enjoyment of a baseball game, you'll probably be disappointed. But if having a thrill-packed day at the ballpark is what you're after, *Triple Play 99* should fit the bill perfectly.

"This is Robert Smolka in San Mateo, handing you back to William Harms and Gary Whitta in the PCGSN studio."

Charlie Hustle would be proud. A head-first slide is just one of the many new animations to be added to *Triple Play 99*. New dialog and color commentary has also been added.

Scale the wall and save the game! *Triple Play 99* will specialize in thrilling plays.

INTERPLAY
VR BASEBALL 99

"Thanks, Rob. We have a few minutes left here, so there's just time to bring you some late-breaking news of two more entrants into the bustling baseball genre this season.

"First up is Interplay's *VR Baseball 99*, a title that could surprise a lot of people. A lot of work is being done here to make sure it can play with the big boys, including a total overhaul of the AI model. The graphics will also get the red-carpet treatment, with more detailed player models, better-looking stadiums, and all new player animations. An area that is sometimes overlooked in sports games is personality, and *VR Baseball 99* is making the effort to concentrate on the little things that mean so much to a game's overall appeal. In-game chatter, along with player and crowd reactions to the action on the field, for example, should help add to the excitement. Finally, the pace of the game will be increased, from load times between menu screens to the frame rate of the action. *VR Baseball 99* must certainly be considered an underdog in the race for baseball sim supremacy, but stranger things have happened...anyone remember the 1969 New York Mets?"

This early screenshot from *VR Baseball 99* gives you some idea of the detail that will go into the player models.

TEAM .366
HIGH HEAT BASEBALL

Fast-paced play combined with realistic results is the ultimate goal of *High Heat Baseball*.

"And here's another game that could come out of nowhere to capture the imagination of baseball fans. As we reported last month on our show 'Under Construction,' the developers Team .366 are total lunatics for anything baseball, and when given the chance to work on their own game, took on the project with a healthy amount of enthusiasm. For the past two years, the team has been refining the AI and game engine of *High Heat Baseball*, shooting for the perfect balance of stat-based, arcade action. After PCGSN has had a chance to put it through its paces, we'll let you know how well they've succeeded.

"And that's about all we've got time for tonight. Our thanks to our special correspondents on the road, Todd Vaughn, Joel Durham, Lisa Renninger, and Rob Smolka. We'll be back in a few months with an all-new PCGSN show, looking at the new wave of football games coming your way in time for the new NFL season. But for now, this is Gary Whitta and William 'Tank' Harms saying good night from PCGSN."

PCGSN SPECIAL REPORT
We Don't Need No Stinking Graphics!

FROM OUR STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT

There are some people out there that couldn't care less whether a baseball game supports 3D accelerators, or how many motion-captured moves there are. These are the true stat-freaks — the kind of folks that care whether the game accurately produces the final batting average of the backup shortstop on the Pirates to within a percentage point of his actual numbers.

Several games out there are aimed at this crowd. While these aren't completely redone each year, they are frequently updated, with new features, refinements to the game's engine, and new player ratings for both recent and classic seasons of the past added.

One of the oldest, and probably best known, is *Strat-O-Matic*. Since the original board game was first released to the public in 1961, *S-O-M* has developed a large following. In 1985, the first computer version appeared, and was tied very tightly to its board game roots, even as far as requiring the player cards from the tabletop game to be used. Since then, the game has gone through many versions on disc, and the latest release of the CD-ROM (v.2.0) has advanced the game into a true Windows 95 product.

Meanwhile, Miller Associates has recently released version 4.0 of its *Baseball for Windows* line. Based on the APBA board game, which first appeared in 1951, *BFW* features Hall of Fame announcer Ernie Harwell as the centerpiece of its stat-based game, along with integration with the Bill James Baseball Encyclopedia. Add-ons such as fantasy managers and previous year's schedules and teams are released on a fairly regular basis.

Other notable titles include *Diamond Mind Baseball* (which was originally a tabletop game known as *Pursue the Pennant*), Lance Haffner's *Full Count Baseball*, and *Baseball Mogul*, which concentrates more on letting the player assume the role of the General Manager, although the statistics produced by the simulation are surprisingly accurate.

PCG

----TRANSCRIPT MESSAGE RECEIVED GSMT 16:42 '47 AGROCOLONY RED SECTOR PRIME
Miller-----Did
you hear that?
ORTEGA-----Yeah...
there's something back there...
Miller-----Ortega...
ORTEGA!
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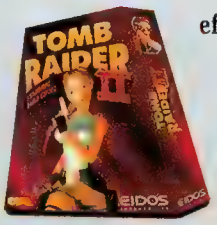
Wiping secretions

Research shows that the leading cause of depression among gamers is a noticeable lack of Eidos games. Fortunately, this deficiency can be treated both safely and effectively with games like Deathtrap Dungeon or Tomb Raider II. But early intervention is crucial. Or else, it's only a matter of time before they threaten to do something really stupid, like go to therapy.



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ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II MULTIPLAYER

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A trip outside goes horribly wrong...

To get us into the proper frame of mind for our baseball preview feature, the staff decided to extricate its collective butt from the comfort of our office chairs and head outside to frolic under that bright, yellow thing better known as the sun. We were all in shock when we found out that, yes indeed, people do go out in the light of day for purposes other than a quick trip to Taco Bell.

We tossed the ball around, took a few cuts at the plate, and a good time was had by all...at least for the first few minutes. Soon after, the snapping sound of unused muscles and tendons could be heard echoing throughout the parking lot. Pasty complexions were being singed by ultraviolet radiation, and eyes used to the familiar glow of fluorescent light were blinded by the ungodly brightness.

The mad rush to escape the horrific conditions resulted in further injuries, as we battled one another to get back through the door to the safety of our sanctuary. Once everyone was safely back at his desk, we made a solemn vow never to repeat such a foolish endeavor and to only get our lunch from places that deliver.

Life has returned to normal since that fateful day, although some of us still have nightmares, and all of us shudder at the thought of the fast-approaching Daylight Savings Time. To protect ourselves, a bin full of sun-block, shades, and Ben-Gay is kept near the door in case, for some reason, we must venture forth into the light once again.

We pray that day never comes.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

F-22 ADF

p.94

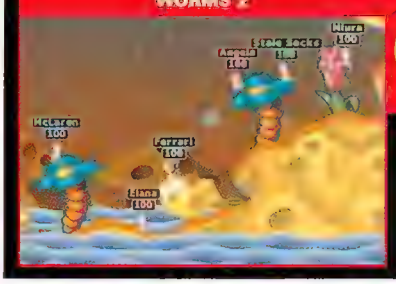
FIFA: ROAD TO WORLD CUP 98

p.144

ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE

p.150

WORMS 2



p.102

Win95

F-22 Air Dominance Fighter

Category: Simulation

Developer: Digital Image Design

Publisher: Ocean of America, 333 W. Santa Clara St., San Jose, CA 95113 (408) 289-1200

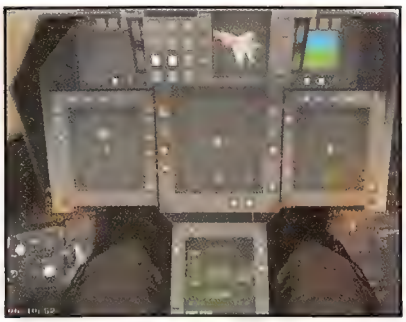
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 70MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Mouse.	8x CD-ROM; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 200MB hard-drive space; Joystick; 3Dfx or Direct3D card; 28.8Kbps modem.

The creators of *EF2000* bring us the hands-down winner of the F-22 simulation stakes.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

DID's *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter* certainly isn't the first simulation of the Air Force's next-generation F-22 Raptor. In fact, by the time *F-22 ADF* was released in the states in early February, NovaLogic and Mission Studios had both released follow-ups to their F-22 sims, and Interactive Magic had announced a sequel to its *iF-22*. But the DID sim proves what our grandparents always said: slow and steady wins the race.

While the other companies were caught up in a contest to be the first with the most — or embroiled in the debate over NovaLogic's attempt to secure exclusive rights to simulate the F-22 — the talented folks at England's Digital Image Design quietly polished their own Raptor sim, determined to create a game that would make us forget all the others.



Like *EF2000* before it, *F-22 ADF* has a detailed virtual cockpit, but higher resolution graphics make it even more readable.

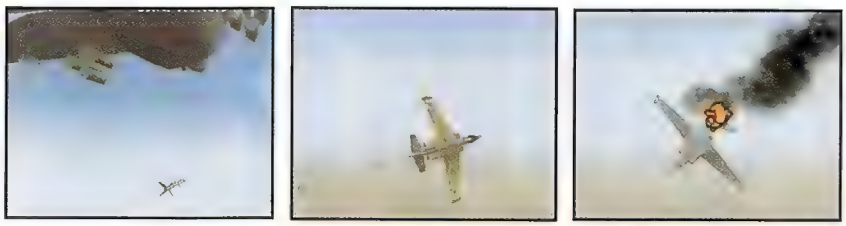
The first way *F-22 ADF* does that is with the beauty and detail of its graphics. Running with a 3Dfx or Direct3D-compatible accelerator card, this is the most amazingly gorgeous sim on the market (with the possible exception of *Longbow 2*). Even without hardware acceleration, *F-22 ADF* is a visual wonder. As you take off, the detail of your home airfield is remarkable; climb to altitude, and you'll pass through translucent cloud layers; pull some high-G turns, and you'll see condensation trails forming along your wings — not to mention the distant contrails of an enemy jet maneuvering for a shot at you. Lines of parachutes stretch out behind cargo planes as they drop supplies on allied troops, and back on the ground, the path of a truck convoy moving through the desert is marked by rising dust clouds. Every time you think you've seen everything *F-22 ADF* has to offer, there's something more.

The view inside the F-22's "glass cockpit" is very nice, too. Four large multi-function display screens (MFDs) and three smaller ones can be customized to give you just the information you want about nearby threats, radar targets, weapons systems, fuel and engine status, etc. — and you can zoom in on any of them and operate it with a click of the mouse. The MFDs in *F-22 ADF* generally work the way they do in DID's last sim, *EF2000*, but higher resolution graphics in the new game's cockpit means they display more information more clearly.

The autopilot in *F-22 ADF* represents another improvement over *EF2000*, with seven different modes. In addition to the standard Waypoint mode that keeps you on your preplanned route, a Heading mode lets you stray from your flight plan while still under autopilot; Track mode maneuvers the jet to attack targets; Speed mode adjusts the throttle to keep your airspeed constant; Takeoff and Landing modes automate those mundane tasks; and a Refuel mode takes most of the risk out of in-flight refueling. The autopilot is made even more versatile by an in-flight waypoint editor that lets you move, delete, or adjust the altitude of any waypoint in your flight plan during the mission. This doesn't just come in handy; it's essential in missions where a predetermined waypoint turns out to be smack in the middle of SAM Central. This is a thinking man's sim.

Are all of these features realistic? Probably not; at the very least, it's unlikely that the Air Force would trust dogfighting and refueling to an automatic pilot. Then again, only a handful of people in the world really know what the F-22's capabilities will be when the real jet goes operational. Obviously, many aspects of its systems are still secret, so a lot of speculation went into *F-22 ADF*.

***F-22 Air Dominance Fighter* is clearly the prettiest F-22 simulation going, but its the sim's balance of detailed authenticity and entertaining gameplay that cements its position at the top.**



An F-22 launches an AIM-120 at a Su-25 Frogfoot. The Su-25 responds with clouds of chaff to fox the missile, but ends up heading for a date with a crater. It's soooo pretty!

The sim challenges you with tours of duty in three different theaters: the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia.

But DID's version of the F-22 simply has a more convincing look and feel than the previous F-22 sims.

This is due in large part to the detail DID put into its simulated systems. The plane's extremely stealthy design could be cancelled out by careless use of devices that emit energy and give it away, like radar, radio, and active jammers, so an emission control system (EMCON) is implemented that lets you manually or automatically adjust these elements as your tactical situation changes. At the stealthiest EMCON level, your radar is turned off, the AMRAAM radar-guided missile is disabled, you can't use your radio to transmit — even your secure In-Flight Data Link (IFDL) is set to receive-only. Your picture of the world around you is limited to what you can pick up with your Infrared Search and Track sensor and passive threat warning indicators; on the other hand, you're as close to invisible as you can be — and since some sources estimate that the F-22 Raptor is 1,000 times more stealthy than the F-15 Eagle, that's pretty darn close.

As you approach visual range to an enemy target, the EMCON system gradually trades stealth for combat readiness; at the highest EMCON level, your radar is fully on, the AMRAAM is enabled, and you can send and receive messages via radio or IFDL.

Another amazing system is the shoot list; the F-22's radar and computers can track multiple targets (as many as you have weapons to attack them with), prioritizing them by the threat they pose to you. Fire a weapon at the first target in the list, and the radar automatically cycles to the next target, then the next, etc. In practice, this means you can fire four AMRAAMs at a flight of four enemy jets in a matter of seconds, attacking them all before they've even spotted you on radar. Other F-22 sims have attempted to model the shoot-list function, but it's not as versatile in the earlier games as it is in *F-22 ADF*, which lets you manually create a shoot list for yourself or your wingman and fire multiple weapons at a single target in salvo or ripple-fire modes.

DID admits to a couple of instances where realism has been sacrificed for gameplay. For example, the jet in *F-22 ADF* carries a wide array of air-to-ground weapons the real jet may never use, like Maverick and Harpoon missiles, LAU rockets, and laser-guided bombs. On the other hand, the real F-22 *is* capable of carrying external weapons under its wings, and it's going to have to be versatile if it's going to replace the F-15 Eagle. Besides, more weapons means more fun.

A more questionable decision puts the F-22's thrust-vectoring nozzles under the manual control of the gamer rather than making them automatic, as in the real jet. Other F-22 simulations have made the use of the thrust nozzles transparent, presumably factoring them into the sim's flight model by making it capable of tighter turns and higher angles of attack, but DID chose to have gamers invoke the thrust vectoring nozzles by holding down a key while maneuvering. The idea was to give us access to both normal and thrust-vectored flight models, but in practice it's a bit of a hassle to reach for the keyboard in the middle of a fangs-out dogfight (and it's tricky to program the command into many programmable joysticks or throttles).

Another drawback comes from the linear nature of *F-22 ADF*'s campaign mode. There are three tours of duty over the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia, but sim fans who came to love *EF2000 2.0* for its ever-changing dynamic campaign will be disappointed. *F-22 ADF*'s campaigns consist of just ten scripted missions each, and every mission has to be completed perfectly before you can move on to the next. Fail, and you'll have to keep repeating the mission until you get it right. That takes a lot of believability out of the experience, and it robs *F-22 ADF* of replay value, too; once you've flown all 30 missions, there's nothing new to see. The good news is that DID has plans for an add-on called *Total Air War* that will upgrade *F-22 ADF* with a real-time dynamic campaign and a detailed mission planner.

Even with a few shortcomings, this is easily the best F-22 Raptor simulation on the market. It's still early in the year as we go to press, but *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter* looks like a solid contender for the title of 1998's best simulation.

— Dan Bennett

Eye in the Sky

A feature of *F-22 ADF* that deserves special mention is the game's wholly unique AWACS mode, which lets you command a large-scale air battle from an Airborne Warning and Control System plane (that's the jet that looks like a passenger plane with a big radar saucer on top), then jump into any F-22 in the area and fly an intercept mission you just assigned. It's all point-and-click, combining elements of real-time strategy games with DID's latest and greatest air combat sim. You say a flight of enemy Su-27s is threatening some friendly Eurofighters on a vital strike mission? No sweat; you just use the mouse to grab a nearby patrol of F-22s, then drag the cursor over to the bad guys. The F-22s will divert to intercept the Su-27s; when they're in combat range, you can let them fight the battle on their own, or you can double-click on their icon to instantly put yourself in the cockpit of the lead plane.

It's very cool, and it's a feature that could have even more significance when DID releases the *Total Air War* add-on with its real-time dynamic campaign system.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Detailed weapons and defense systems; nifty AWACs mode; gorgeous graphics.

90%

LOWS: Linear campaigns can be frustrating; occasional graphic glitches in Direct 3D mode.

BOTTOM LINE: A great simulation of a fascinating jet; as much fun to fly as it is to look at.

Win95

Scud: Industrial Evolution

Category: Action

Developer: Syrox Developments

Publisher: SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Drive, Redwood City, CA 94065 (888) 734-2763

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Supported sound card

Scud, the Disposable Assassin, comes to the PC — but we wish he would've stayed in his vending machine.

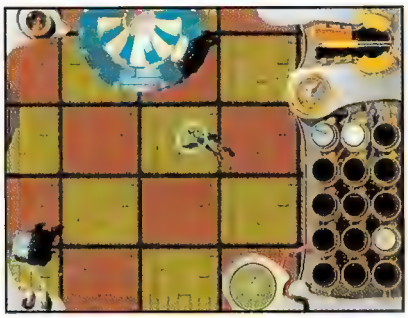
If the computer gaming industry has shown us anything, it's that licensing is never easy. Though the metamorphosis of viable commercial properties into digital dog poo is a phenomenon that most frequently occurs in movie-licensed titles, comic books have had mixed results when translated into the interactive medium. *X-Men: Children of the Atom* was a nice fighting-game showcase for Stan Lee's mighty mutants, while *Iron Man XO Manowar in Heavy Metal* made us want to slit our wrists. *Scud: Industrial Evolution* is, unfortunately, another example of a great concept based on a successful and entertaining comic book (*Scud: The Disposable Assassin*) turned into a lousy, unoriginal game.

In *Scud: Industrial Evolution* you play the role of the Scud Heartbreaker 1373, a banana-yellow robot assassin who's unceremoniously dispensed from a vending machine to deal death on an unfortunate victim. The catch is that Scud is a one-hit assassin. Once the Scud unit waxes his intended target, it self-destructs. But this particular Scud model finds that staying among the living is more fun than setting off an internally-detonated bomb, and throughout his adventures Scud must struggle to keep his target alive.

Though this promising set-up is lifted from the comic book, all of the humor and story line twists that give the comic book a personality all its own are unceremoniously chucked into the trash thanks to a cookie-cutter game design. *Scud* is a top-down scrolling shooter, where you blast through factories and other dark and gritty locations, destroying crazed robots and other psychotic beasties. Luckily, Scud's two Magnums are equipped with an infinite number of bullets, and special weapons from flamethrowers to grenades can be picked up at certain locations. Each level's objective is simple: find the boss, lead him back to the exit, and don't let him — or yourself — get killed. This isn't as easy as it sounds, since you have to trigger switches and open doors to get access to the boss, and the levels are swamped with enemies who love to cluster around you. You'll also enjoy walking down innocent-looking hallways and getting bashed by battering rams that pop out of the wall without any prior warning or time to react.

That mechanism in the center of the screen is a robot generator. A constant stream of nasties will flow out of this device, so keep those Magnums ready.

But even more irritating are the numerous pits that have been laid out for you. We don't mind a jumping puzzle here or there, but in some of the later levels, it's impossible to tell an open pit from a dark shadow (and there are *plenty* of both). And when you plunge down those inky holes, it's game over, and the level slooowly reloads. Most lessons are learned the hard way, so rote memorization (and mapping out the level on graph paper) is the only way you'll make it alive. And even *that* might not help — take one wrong step in *Scud*, and you're probably screwed.



In the fun house level, you'll have to deal with these bumper cars gone mad. Start running now, since these guys are a pain to kill.

There's a lot more to moan about. Since Scud is metallic, he'll be dragged towards electromagnets that have been scattered over the levels. While these magnets serve as a minor source of annoyance during the first levels, the final stage involves a tightrope-walk while you're being pulled every which way by these troublesome invisible forces.

Though the design is flawed, *Scud* does look awfully nice. The frame rate is liquid-smooth, Scud and his adversaries are handsomely rendered (if a bit tiny), and there's even some of that colored lighting stuff. Sixteen-player network play is in there, but competing over SegaSoft's Heat.net may be a tricky proposition — even on weekends, I couldn't find anyone to play with.

If you're a fan of the comic book, the disappointment is that there's not much to hold your interest in *Scud*. There are none of the comic book's running gags, and Scud's comedy-relief sidekick, Drywall, is nowhere to be found. Without any story to back it up, or humor to keep you interested, *Scud* is an exercise in frustration that plays like an old shareware game.

—Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

39%

HIGHS: The graphics are nice and the frame rates are fast.

LOWS: Repetitive gameplay. Dreadful music. Insanely difficult.

BOTTOM LINE: If you have the patience and the skills to beat this one, you are The Man. But you still won't enjoy it much.

run, shoot, run, shoot
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shoot, shoot, run, run

bored yet?

run, stop, hear soldiers flanking yo
scanner, duck under gun turret's fi
lines, turn on flashlight, sneak pas
window, surprise squad of soldie
H λ L F -
MATURE
M
AGES 17+
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
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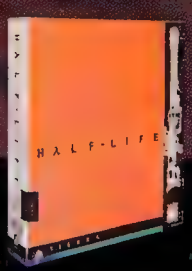
u, retreat, lead scientist to retinal
re, loot enemy corpse, cut power
st four-story alien, break through
rs, aim, shoot, kill...

L I F E

...stop, catch breath, point browser: www.sierra.com/half-life



SIERRA® STUDIOS

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Mysteries of the Sith

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94192 (800) 782-7927

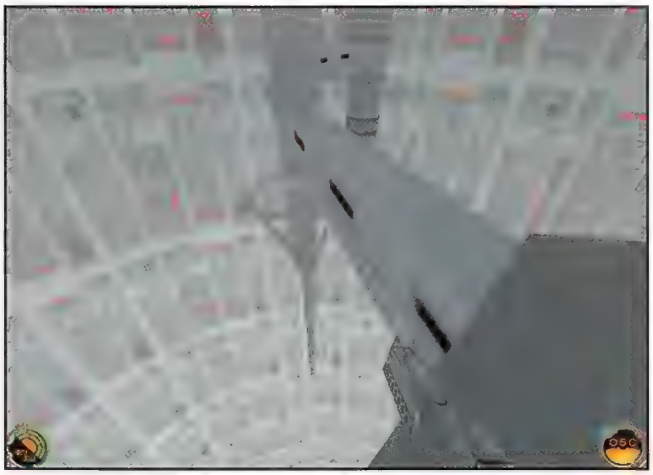
Required	We Recommend
Full version of *Jedi Knight*; Win 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Win95 compatible sound card	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 32MB RAM; Direct3D compatible 3D accelerator

This expansion pack for our 1997 Game of the Year has everything we love about the original, and a few cool new twists.

As a single-player game, *Jedi Knight* became a classic the day it was released. Having played it through a few dozen times, though, we were foaming at the mouth in anticipation of *Mysteries of the Sith*. Fortunately, it was worth the wait.

The story line is broken into four scenarios, from an Imperial attack on a New Republic base to a crawl through the temple of a weird Force cult called the Sith. The story is carried by cut-scenes built from the game's own engine (actually, they sorta look like the growing library of *Quake* movies). At first, you're in the familiar boots of Kyle Katarn (who is now a "good" Jedi no matter which path you chose to take through *Jedi Knight*). Later, you leap into the shoes of Mara Jade, a character from Timothy Zahn's Star Wars novels and Kyle's apprentice.

There are 14 new single-player levels in all, and they look as good as those in *Jedi Knight*. In fact, the addition of colored lighting sometimes makes the graphics more interesting, but it's often overused, resulting in an unnaturally flashy look. Although the level design lacks the flat-out genius of *Jedi Knight*, it certainly holds its own. The new maps are more challenging than the originals; you really have to keep your eyes open for hidden passages. This is taken to the extreme in the final few levels, with puzzle elements so complicated they almost belong in a game like *Tomb Raider 2*. Another couple of levels present awkward moments when a ship or base you're in is attacked, and you're called to a certain part of it ("Mara, come to the bridge!"). Suddenly, you realize that while your character might have been to the bridge before, *you* haven't, and you have no idea how to get there!

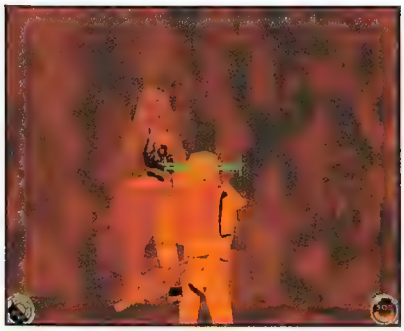


The Cloud City gantry, which Luke jumped off of rather than admit Darth was his dad, is now a deathmatch location. Don't try Luke's stunt; the Millenium Falcon won't come and rescue you.

One cool thing about many of the levels is that they're populated with Rebel soldiers that actually fight on your side. Although they're generally dumb and ineffective, and you'll end up vanquishing most of the stormtroopers yourself, it's pretty cool to see a bona fide battle going on around you.

Sith is sprinkled with new force powers, new weapons, and plenty of new bad guys to use them on. The Light Saber Throw is very cool, allowing you to toss your saber at unsuspecting victims, and Force Projection is a decoy just like the Holoduke from *Duke Nukem 3D*. Speaking of Duke, other new weapons bring it to mind: the Sequencer charges now have a remote detonation capability like Duke's pipe bombs, and the Carbonite gun will freeze opponents into frosty pops for a few seconds, just like Duke's freezer. You can also grab a scope to make your blaster ultimate sniper weapon.

The new enemies are widely varied and appropriate to the levels they appear on. Besides pirates, smugglers, new Imperials, and a few droids, you'll get to face the almighty Rancor and some creepy, lightsaber-wielding statues that shatter into pieces when you slay them.



The stormtrooper rifle now has a scope attachment: use it to pick off far away enemies with alarming accuracy.

Though the intricacies of *Jedi Knight*'s multi-player gaming are lost on some fans of the more feral, run-around-and-shoot-as-fast-as-you-can games, here at *PC Gamer* we love it. So we were happy to see that new multi-player options also abound in *Sith*. You can play as one of four different "personalities," including Jedi Knight, Scout, Bounty Hunter, and Soldier; each starts with different weapons and Force powers. There are plenty of new deathmatch levels, and a new game called "Kill the Fool With the Ysalamiri" (or, as we call it, Kill the Guy With the Thingy) that involves grabbing a Force-absorbing lizard and trying to keep it as long as you can while other players try to massacre you and take it away.

While not exactly earth-shattering, *Mysteries of the Sith* is a very solid add-on for an incredible game. *Jedi Knight* fans hungry for more are encouraged to dive in.

—Joel Durham

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

87%

HIGHS: New weapons, enemies, levels, and Force powers; solid level design.

LOWS: Some levels are too puzzle-heavy; colored lighting is overdone at times.

BOTTOM LINE: This is a great expansion pack for an awesome game.

Real Time

Real Strategy

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A TODD PORTER GAME

Product Information Number 134

Fallout
A POST NUCLEAR ROLE PLAYING GAME
"The tightly integrated mix of combat, storytelling and puzzling keeps the pace brisk and lively, and it'll keep you coming back for more."
- PC Gamer (Rating 90%)
PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
"It's a game that clearly was a labor of love...with humor, style, and brains to spare, and with a wonderfully refreshing emphasis on character development and decision making."
- Computer Gaming World (Rating 4-1/2 out of 5)
CG CHOICE
"In an age where many are predicting the death of traditional RPGs at the hands of multiplayer extravaganzas, Fallout is a glowing example of the genre, one which positively radiates quality."
- Strategy Plus (Rating 4-1/2 out of 5)
COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL
"Interplay set out to create a 'real' RPG for the PC, and it's more than succeeded."
- GamePro (Rating 4.75 out of 5)
"Fallout is one of the finest games published this year, and is sure to be a serious contender for numerous Game-Of-The-Year awards."
- Online Gaming Review (Rating 9.5 out of 10)
Best Rolyplaying Game
-PC Gamer 1998 Awards
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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
Mac OS
MATURE M AGES 17+ ESRB

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Product Information Number 190

Win95

WarWind II: Human Onslaught

Category: Strategy

Developer: DreamForge

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 4x CD drive; P90; 16MB RAM; 2MB Super VGA video card; 50MB HD space; Windows-compatible sound card; Mouse	P120; 32MB RAM

The sequel to SSI's deep real-time strategy game may not be as sexy as the competition, but it plays like the dickens.

SSI's WarWind series just can't seem to catch a break. When the original *WarWind* was released, it faced an uphill battle against charges that it was a *WarCraft II* rip-off. It didn't help matters that it *was* a *WarCraft II* rip-off, but for those who dared try it, *WarWind* revealed superior gameplay and enough new elements to actually make it a better game in many respects. Now *WarWind II: Human Onslaught* rolls into town just in time to be ritually disemboweled by a public buried under inferior real-time strategy games.

That's a shame, because, as with the original, *WarWind II* is a rich and rewarding game. The story begins after the battle for Yavaun, with the Tha'Roon reasserting their power over the Obblinox to form the Overlords. The other sides in the war, the Shama'Li and the Eaggra, have also united to form the Servants Under NagaRom (S.U.N.). As the war continues, a group of scientists and their Marine contingent unearth a mysterious slab on far-away Earth. As they study this relic of NagaRom, it activates, transporting the scientists and marines smack dab into the middle of the final S.U.N/Overlord battle. As the sides fall back to regroup, the humans split into two armies. The human scientists, known as the Descendants, merely want to return to Earth, while the Marines want to seize the opportunity to form a new nation on Yavaun. These four groups make up the combatants of *WarWind II*.

A small contingent of humans is led to a slaughter by their leader, whose ability to impart a combat bonus is no help here.

Campaigns can be played as each of the four major groups, with different missions and challenges that take place across four dozen maps. The blend of alien races (Obblinox/Tha'Roon and Shama'Li/Eaggra) make for interested combined unit warfare, especially when faced with the traditional combat forces of the human onslaught.

As you would expect, each side has its own unique strengths. The Marines have superior firepower, the Overlords have brute strength, the S.U.N. has magic, and the Descendants have technology. Aside from the four campaigns, there is a full tutorial and a potent map and scenario editor. Multi-player support allows for four gamers over LAN or TCP/IP and two over a direct connection. A number of multi-play scenarios offer a variety of challenges, such as building forces from scratch, starting with a large force, racing for a marker, and team play.

Controls and gameplay are as expected from a real-time strategy game; you build a compound, then create forces to defend it and fulfill the mission goals. Resources are harvested for raw currency, and butanium is gathered and refined to power machinery. On advanced settings, supply points must be allocated each turn, adding another level of complexity. However, *WarWind II* steps beyond these familiar ideas by adding a strong element of roleplaying. Missions are not all of the "kill 'em all, let god sort 'em out" variety (at least, not usually). They are more complex, with an almost puzzle-like structure that requires various steps and careful planning.

Each side can choose a leader for the campaign, and this leader must be protected at all costs. In the course of a mission, units may also be trained and upgraded to improve their performance. Spells, cybernetic enhancements, and vehicle upgrades can all improve your

The scenario editor lets you make custom maps and place units, structures, and victory goals.

core units. These core units may then be placed in the Hall of Heroes and carried from mission to mission, along with any goodies they pick up (such as potions and bombs). In any given mission, your leader may have three or four tasks, such as meeting an informant, picking up supplies, and then dropping them off at a given location. Since Yavaun is crawling not only with the opposition, but also with a large variety of both benign and hostile animals, combat becomes a part of every mission. As often as not, however, combat and the complete destruction of the enemy is not the sole objective.

WarWind II can stand alongside many (and above most) of the current crop of real-time strategy games, despite a few problems. The maps are very cluttered and not as sharp as, say, *Dark Reign*. The complex nature of the many orders each unit can perform can be a little bewildering, and the interface is a bit funky. Selecting and deselecting units is a real pain, since each unit you click with the left mouse button stays clicked until deselected with the right. This means you're always forming groups that you didn't want to form. Once you get past these niggles, however, you'll get a lot of entertainment out of *WarWind II*.

—*T. Liam McDonald*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

81%

HIGHS: Interesting, challenging missions with a real sense of role-playing and story.

LOWS: Visually somewhat dated and cluttered. Some annoying interface quirks.

BOTTOM LINE: *WarWind II* proves again that real-time strategy is more than slash and burn.

Worms 2

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Strategy

Developer: Team 17

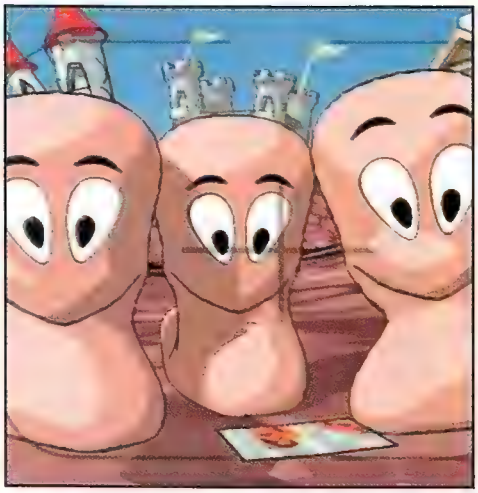
Publisher: MicroProse, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 864-4550

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; Mouse; 50MB free hard-drive space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 32MB RAM

Mindless killing and cartoon comedy make for one of the most addictive games of the year.

It's not often a game comes along that's as simple as it is satisfying, but here's *Worms 2* with proof that it can be done. Like the original *Worms* from a couple of years ago, this is a turn-based strategy game that has an arcade feel to it, but it's so wickedly intuitive, funny, and challenging, you'll have a hard time taking it off your hard drive. It's nothing fancy; just some worms, some weapons, and a sense of humor mingled with a classic contest of kill-or-be-killed.

That's right. I said worms. But these aren't your everyday, garden-variety worms: These are animated Rambo-style worms whose antics bring tons of charm to this cutesy little game. As you begin each game your team of worms (up to eight on a team) are randomly placed on a 2D landscape along with the opposing teams, and during your turn, you simply try to destroy the other teams' worms using a multitude of inventive weapons. Last worm standing wins — that's all there is to it.



***Worms 2*'s wicked sense of humor starts with the many different animations that play while the game is loading. They're all as nasty as they want to be.**

Though the concept is amazingly simple, *Worms 2* is consistently challenging. Each worm begins with 100 hit points, and the goal is to wear each enemy worm down to zero, killing them before they can do the same to you. During each turn, you select a worm, equip him with the weapon you want him to use, then aim and fire — but don't take too long; the clock is ticking. Luckily, the controls are kept simple; just use the cursor keys to move your worm around the map and target your opponent, then hit the spacebar to blast away. The weapons range from a simple shotgun to full-blown air strikes and hilarious killers like the super banana bomb, holy hand grenade, and homing sheep.

Here, four worms are right on top of each other. Whoever gets to make the first move has a real advantage.

But it isn't just point-and-shoot-mayhem. You'll have to carefully select which weapons you want to use and when. Many of the advanced weapons are strictly rationed (you may only get one of each), and if used improperly can do as much damage to your own worms as to others.

Anyone familiar with the original *Worms* will be glad to know the charm that made it so enjoyable remains. The graphics are spiffed up a bit and there's even more of the original's amusing speech and sound effects, but it's basically the same game — with a lot of new weapons added, of course.

Some of the new weapons are pretty wild. There's the super sheep, a steerable flying ewe of destruction; a mad cow stampede; and — one of my favorites — the old woman who ambles around the map complaining about the price of tea and mumbling about the good old days, then explodes.

A final touch that adds yet another spark of fun to *Worms 2* is the ability to play other people. There's a "hot-seat" feature for as many as 18 players on the same keyboard, plus Internet and LAN support for as many as six players. It's in these multi-play games that *Worms 2* really comes into its own. Players jockey for position, taunt each other, and give their teams and worms side-splitting names (most of which are unprintable here, of course). Like the worms' names, just about everything in the game is customizable, including the terrain, sounds, rules, and weapon effects.

The only drawback is how the computer plays. At times, the computer-controlled worms are far too accurate, pulling off seemingly impossible shots with deadly accuracy — then the AI shoots itself in the foot with a knuckle-headed move. The single-player game is still fun, but multi-play is really where it's at.

There's an almost child-like appeal in blowing up these worms. It's such a basic, simplistic game; no complex strategies; a single mission doesn't take more than ten minutes; and there's an infinite variety of maps. But, most importantly, *Worms 2* delivers a hearty dose of good old-fashioned *fun*, and for that it comes heartily recommended.

—Joseph Novicki

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Simple, fun, well-balanced combat; many excellent weapons; great multi-player.

LOWS: The computer player's erratic shooting will occasionally baffle you.

BOTTOM LINE: *Worms 2* has a combination of destruction and fun that shouldn't be missed.

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C&C: Sole Survivor

Win95 ONLINE

Category: Action

Developer: Westwood Studios

Publisher: Westwood Studios, 2440 North Tenaya Way, Las Vegas, NV 89128 (702) 228-4040

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; 28.8kbps modem	Supported sound card; 56.6kbps modem

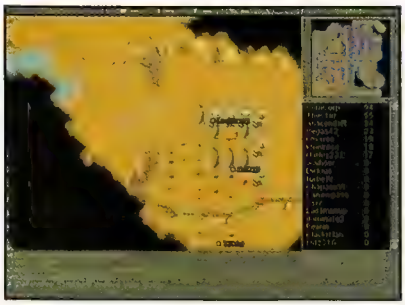
A surprising dud in the Command & Conquer series, *Sole Survivor* is monotonous, frustrating, and pointless.

Click, click, click... that's the sound of a thousand people futilely pounding their mouse buttons in *Sole Survivor*, an ill-conceived spin-off from the excellent Command & Conquer franchise.

On paper, it sounds like a great idea. Take the multi-player fun of deathmatch and capture-the-flag from action games like *Doom* or *Quake* and set it in the 2D, top-down scenery of the ever-popular C&C universe. Unfortunately, the end result is nowhere near as good as the idea sounds.

Be advised this is an action game, not a strategy game, and it's online-only to boot. It looks like *Command & Conquer*, and uses its most recent engine and units. But unlike the frantic unit management of *C&C*, in *Sole Survivor*, the player only controls one unit at a time, running around, gathering power-ups and trying to blast the enemy while avoiding getting clobbered.

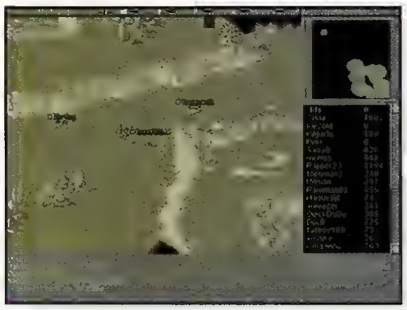
Every player picks one starting unit, which can be any of the ground units from *Command & Conquer* or its add-on packs. Each unit starts with basic stats for firepower, speed, armor, reload rate, and the like.



***Sole Survivor* combines the deathmatch modes of *Quake II* with the RTS perspective.**

These starting stats are raised by grabbing crates. Different colored boxes cover the battlefield, respawning constantly. Ordinary brown crates will upgrade one of your attributes, alter your cloaking status or your radar and maps, or even randomly teleport you. Silver and green crates give a bigger boost, or repair your health, respectively. The orange ones max out all your stats, but only for 30 seconds. When you die, you start over with all your stats back down to their starting values.

To keep the game fair between someone who was just killed and someone who's been grabbing crates for a good five minutes, a certain risk factor is built in. The more crates you grab, the more likely you are to be hit by an ion cannon, which delivers a hefty health zap. Though it does keep things fairly even, it's an extraordinarily heavy-handed design element; instead of being rewarded for success you're arbitrarily blasted (quite literally) by a bolt out of the blue.



If playing *Quake II* with tiny little *C&C* guys sounds like fun to you — well, it's not.

Also tiresome is the random teleporting. Not only are there permanent teleport pads on the map, but the inclusion of random teleportation in the crate power-ups means combat often randomly breaks off.

Five game types provide some variety. The first of these, and the only way to play offline, is the trainer. This puts you on one of the multi-player maps, against one to ten conputer-controlled units. However, this mode does little to prepare you for the actual online games and is so dull that it offers no real stand alone play value.

The most basic online game is the free-for-all, and it is easily the worst of the lot. The game allows for a high number of players who they can jump in or out on a whim — and herein lies the problem. People randomly run about grabbing crates and shooting while veteran players either hang around the crate clusters, or cruise around looking for easy "mooch kills." While this kind of gameplay is fun in something immersive and visceral like *Quake*, it borders on the ridiculous on a top-down, real-time strategy game map shrouded in a fog of war.

Humans vs. Hunted is a co-op game, pitting any and all players who enter the game against a group of computer-controlled units. Players pop in and out of a game randomly, there is no teamwork or established leaders, no goals to accomplish, simply the destruction of somewhat arbitrarily-placed AI units; it's as tedious as the free-for-all.

The last two games are team-based, and probably the only ones worth playing in *Sole Survivor*. In Capture The Flag, two teams try to overrun each other's flags in heavily-defended bases. Teams therefore need a mix of units — fast vehicles for flag-grabbing, and the longer-ranged weapons for reducing base defenses. And in the football variant, each base is simply an end zone — you run around and shoot the other guys, trying to get their flag and take it to your base. But the big problem with the team games is that it is practically impossible for people to organize teams and leaders, let alone plan effectively, with so many strangers popping in and out of a game non-stop. How well would the Chicago Bulls do if anybody who bought a ticket could run onto the court, grab the ball and start shooting?

Even if you do manage to organize some teamwork, it's still the same point-and-click melee that drops dead in comparison to *Quake II*, *SubSpace*, or even *C&C* itself. In the end *Sole Survivor* hardly seems worth the effort. It smacks of a cynical attempt to squeeze some more money out of the Command & Conquer name, but in reality all it does is sully the good name of that brand. Avoid this one like the plague.

—Jason Bates

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

35%

HIGHS: No hourly or monthly charges.

LOWS: Monotonous, poorly conceived game that is overly dependent on randomly clicking here, there, and everywhere.

BOTTOM LINE: Feels like an online-only quickie that cashes in on the C&C name.

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Product Information Number 324

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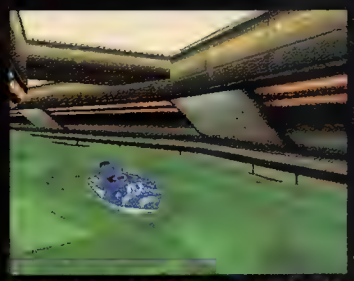

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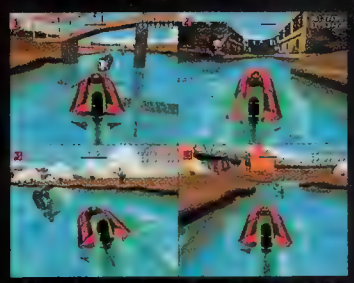

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PlayStation

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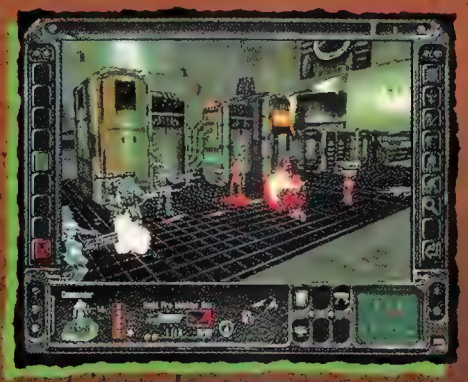

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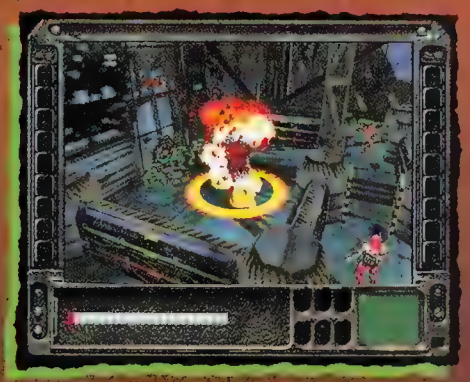

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Product Information Number 101

JSF: Joint Strike Fighter

Win95

Category: Simulation

Developer: Interloop

Publisher: Eidos Interactive, 651 Brannan St., San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 547-1200

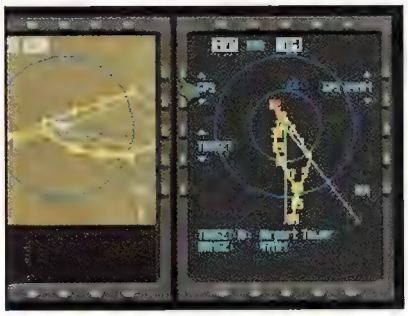
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator; Joystick; Throttle

The high-flying exploits of two future fighters are grounded by a vague campaign and fussy weapons modeling.

On its surface, Eidos's *JSF: Joint Strike Fighter* seems poised to steal some of the thunder from the latest round of F-22 simulations by giving the player an enticing glimpse into the future of air combat. Not only does it have the stellar graphics, dynamic campaign engine, and versatile mission editor sim fans crave, it features two bleeding-edge superplanes that could give the highly touted F-22 a run for its money.

Based on the Pentagon's new directive to develop a multi-service, multi-role, and multi-national fighter aircraft to replace the aging F-16 and AV8B Harrier II, *JSF* features a pair of sexy, stealthy prototypes that are being considered for the role — the McDonnell Douglas/Boeing X-35 and the Lockheed Martin X-36. While both planes are still on the drawing board and aren't set to take flight until the 21st century, the initial specifications for the JSF planes are more than enough to get flight fanatics drooling. The JSF planes will use many of the developments that came out of the F-22 program: internal weapon bays, stealth technology, advanced weaponry, modular MFDs, and supersonic flight without afterburner, allowing the JSF to perform strikes, air superiority, and ground support missions with equal effectiveness.

Unfortunately, the game doesn't make the most of its subject matter. When all is said and done, *JSF* is a fussy, unwieldy, and unfriendly sim that simply can't compete for the attention of sim veterans or novices. *JSF* offers three modes of play: an instant action dogfight mode, a multi-player mode for head-to-head action, and any of four full campaigns set in Afghanistan, Columbia, Korea, and the Kola Peninsula. The dogfight and multi-player modes are self-explanatory — get up in the air and shoot the other guy down — and both are serviceable enough, but they don't really take advantage of the JSF prototypes' unique characteristics.



As in *EF2000*, *JSF*'s cockpit displays are more than eye candy; they're fully functional and useable displays.

Where the game begins to show its promise (and its problems) is in the campaign mode. In theory, the campaign mode has just about everything you'd want in a modern air combat sim: A built-in mission planner lets you create and edit a flight plan, set the altitude for every point along your route, customize your weapons load, and designate aircraft to act as your wingmen with just a few clicks of the mouse. And it's a dynamic campaign; the conflict unfolds dynamically from mission to mission as computer-controlled forces advance, retreat, and attack in response to your tactics, forcing you to adapt your own strategy. But having control of the air war isn't all it's cracked up to be; since you get very limited information about each mission, you're left to blindly select targets, weapons, and flight paths in an unending spiral of trial and error.

Each mission in a campaign game is kicked off with a trip to the mission planner. A static map is dotted with icons representing primary and secondary targets, and it displays the locations of enemy radar installations and danger zones covered by SAM sites. The basic information is here, but there's no clear indication of the opposition's force strength, defenses, and movements, and no priority is given to one primary target over another. Without these vital bits of data, you don't know if the target you've selected will be defended by three dozen SAM sites or a flight of potent Su-27s — or even if the target's destruction is vital to the success of the campaign.

This lack of useful intelligence puts the player on unstable footing when arming for a mission. More often than

The versatile terrain engine is one of the high points of *JSF*, delivering an outstanding level of detail both at ground level and in the air, with or without 3D acceleration.

not, you're forced to make an uncomfortable compromise, outfitting for a worst-case scenario and sacrificing stealth for a broad selection of weapons that can handle whatever force might be out there. Of course, once you've flown a mission and surveyed the target zone, you'll be able to return to the planner to rearm accordingly — but unless you do exactly that, you're on your own.

You don't have to use the mission planner — you can have the computer "suggest" several ready-made flights — but the pre-generated missions suffer from the same problems as your home-made ones: you don't even get so much as a text message describing the mission objective, potential force strength, or possible defenses you might encounter. Is it too much to ask that you know what you're going up against and why? Apparently so.

After some missions, you'll get new information on the primary targets within the conflict (there's a fixed number of primaries for each campaign), but these updates provide painfully little illumination as to your next course of action. These briefings simply suggest which target should be attacked next, with no clear directives as to how many fighters you can expect to encounter; whether or not the SAM batteries are still active; or whether you should attack the target with stealth or maximum firepower.

Another major problem lies in the way the campaigns unfold. Basically, it's you and three wingmen against the world. At the start of each campaign, your squadron is outfitted with a fixed number of planes; lose your surplus of planes, and you lose the war. Other allied resources are unavailable to you in the mission planner, so there's no hope of developing a coordinated strike with air superiority fighters to handle enemy CAP and strike jets to take out the SAM defenses before your flight comes in to hit the primary target. In fact, there are hardly any allied craft to be found in a campaign. There are plenty of AWACs jets in the air providing situational info on the war as it happens, but you'll rarely find other allied aircraft assisting you in the fight. Where are the bombers, CAP fighters, and ground support aircraft? Did somebody forget to invite them to the war?

As the toughest campaign in JSF, the Kola Peninsula conflict pits your JSF fighters against wave after wave of Russian hardware.

Lacking the ability to plan a coherent strategy, most players will opt to plow through the campaigns by targeting all of the primary targets before the five-day time limit runs out. But if you decide to take this route, *JSF*'s funky weapons modeling makes it hard to come back successful — even when you know exactly what you're up against. While the dumb and smart bombs do the job admirably, the two air-to-air missiles available (the AIM-120C AMRAAM and the AIM-9X Sidewinder) and one air-to-ground missile (AGM-88C HARM) available in the game aren't as dependable.

Even though the JSF planes feature the latest in stealth technology, jets like the MiG-29 can still pack a wallop if you let your guard down.

The AIM-120s do a fairly good job against low-tech Mirages, but in nearly every engagement with enemy F-16s, Su-27s, and even lumbering Il-76's, the AIM-120s prove to be virtually useless, since every enemy pilot seems to have a superhuman ability to spoof nearly every missile fired.

Ground attack missions are even more difficult, thanks to a weak weapon selection and extremely poor targeting. Using the AGM-88, you should be able to target and destroy SAM sites before entering their missiles' range — the AGM-88 is an anti-radiation missile designed to lock on the energy given off by enemy radar, so active SAM sites stand out like a sore thumb to its sensors. But in the shipping version of *JSF*, SAM sites are virtually undetectable until you're well within their zone of attack — often not until you're right on top of them. A patch addresses the problem, but doesn't quite clear it up; you'll still have a hard time locating, let alone destroying, SAMs before they fire on you.

It's anybody's guess whether or not the flight models for these two classified, prototype planes are accurate, but there aren't any obvious problem areas. Both planes are nimble, fast, and stable, letting players concentrate on the threat in front of them rather than fighting the controls. But there are a few in-cockpit features that will make veteran sim pilots grind their teeth. Both planes are equipped with a terrain-following autopilot, but for take-charge pilots it's a real source of frustration. During low-level flight under manual control, the autopilot won't let you dip below its preset safety zone; it takes control until the preset altitude is reached. In the campaign mode, this is hardly a problem — you'll have ample time to reset the autopilot on the runway — but when you start the dogfight mode with enemies hot on your tail, it's a pain, plain and simple. The problem is so annoying that many *JSF* players have taken to lowering their landing gear when they want to go below the autopilot's limit, since dropping your wheels turns the autopilot off altogether.

Another area for complaint is that several vital instrument functions can only be accessed through the virtual cockpit. As in *EF2000*, the MFD displays in *JSF* aren't just for looks, they are usable, active displays that can be turned on and off with a click of the mouse. Unlike *EF2000*, though, *JSF* doesn't provide keyboard shortcuts that duplicate all of the MFDs' vital functions. Mousing around the interactive virtual cockpit is fine when you're sitting on a runway or cruising over friendly territory, but it's a real hindrance when you're caught in the middle of a flight of Su-27s — taking your eyes off the sky to fiddle with MFDs is the last thing you'll want to do.

JSF is potentially a very interesting sim, but it's riddled with problems. With more complete intelligence in the campaigns, better weapons modeling, and a selection of tutorial missions for weapons training, *JSF* could've given even DID's *F-22* something to worry about. As it stands, though, it's just another good idea gone bad.

— *Todd Vaughn*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

59%

HIGHS: Pretty graphics with or without 3D hardware; good head-to-head options.

LOWS: A shortage of data makes the campaign feel vague; touchy controls; no tutorial missions.

BOTTOM LINE: *JSF* is a lightweight sim with some heavyweight problems.

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Product Information Number 273

PSYGNOSIS

PC CD ROM

TEEN AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

The Journeyman Project 3:

Category: Adventure

Developer: Presto Studios

Publisher: Red Orb Entertainment, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 *www.redorb.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 70MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Mouse	Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; Supported sound card

Once again, bad acting and weak writing sabotage what could have been an excellent adventure game.

When the element of sound was first added to film, Hollywood had some trouble making the transition. The first "talkies" suffered from technical limitations (dialogue had to be recorded by big, stationary microphones, so actors couldn't move around) and from human limitations (some of the great silent actors sounded terrible when they opened their mouths to speak). Adventure games seem to be in a similar transitional period; most of their technical limitations have been solved, but as *The Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time* proves, the human problems of bad acting and bad writing remain in even the best games.

LoT returns us to the adventures of Gage Blackwood, Agent 5 of the Temporal Security Agency. As the game begins, Earth faces a crisis: unknown aliens have invaded human space in search of something they call "The Legacy." And Gage himself faces a more personal crisis: Michelle Visard, renegade TSA Agent 3, is still loose in the past, and all the TSA's time suits have been shut down by order of Congress.

Stealing an experimental time suit to track Michelle down, Gage discovers that three legendary cities — Atlantis, El Dorado, and Shangri-La — were not only real, but were destroyed in the past by the same aliens now heading for Earth. These three cities each contained one piece of the mysterious "Legacy of Time," and Gage has to find them before the aliens arrive. The bulk of the game has the player time-travelling to explore each city the day before it was destroyed, solving puzzles and interacting with the inhabitants in classic adventure game fashion.

Technically, *LoT* is a standout, a true evolutionary step forward for adventure gaming. You view the world through Gage's helmet, rotating the view through 360 degrees and clicking on "hot spots" to move and interact with the environment. The interface and panoramic views will be familiar to anyone who played *Zork: Grand Inquisitor,* although the technology in *LoT* is far superior.

The name's Khan... Ghengis Khan.

Fantastic Voyages

Atlantis

Atlantis is a legendary lost continent where a fabulous utopian civilization is said to have existed. First mentioned by Plato in his dialogues "Timaeus" and "Critias," written about 355 bc, the lost continent has fired popular imagination for centuries. Plato supposedly based his accounts on certain ancient documents in his possession, but historians have speculated that Plato may have "invented " the Atlantis documents in order to support his arguments.

Shangri-La

Shangri-La entered the popular imagination in a novel by James Hilton, and later in the classic 1937 film "Lost Horizon." The story tells of a group of Europeans who crash-land in the Himalayas while fleeing war-torn China. They are rescued and find themselves in a beautiful land called Shangri-La. Eventually, of course, the travelers, who have brought the evils of the world with them, aren't content to stay in Shangri-La and are destroyed by their own ambitions and passions.

El Dorado

The name El Dorado means "Golden Man" and was applied first to a man, later to a city, and finally to a country — all legendary. The legend arose from the custom of the South American Muysca tribe of anointing each new chief with resinous gums and covering him with gold dust. The chief would then plunge into a sacred lake and wash off the gold while his people threw in offerings of emeralds and gold. (Nice work if you can get it.)

Legacy of Time

Win95

This Atlantean ferryman will take you where you need to go... for the right price.

The three worlds of *LoT* are strikingly beautiful. These days, any trained monkey can string together a bunch of pretty pictures and call it an adventure game, but *LoT* still manages to stand out. Transitions between still scenes and pre-rendered scenes are seamless; looking up into the sun causes lens flares; and spot animations bring a sense of life to the game world. Unfortunately, the quality of these animations is inconsistent; in Atlantis, for example, a blue-screened actor in a boat blends amazingly well with the background, but the water around the boat doesn't move or ripple. The spot animations do tend to draw attention to the areas that aren't animated, but they're a big improvement over the completely still pictures used in other games.

Of course, a good adventure game is more than pretty pictures. *LoT* is a spectacular technical achievement, but this impressive framework is home to an utterly conventional game. *LoT* doesn't lack great ideas; they're just imperfectly executed. For example, the Shangri-La puzzles are based on aspects of Buddhist mythology that are both historically accurate and manage to fit into the game's plot. Throughout the game, in fact, the integration of puzzles into the story line is amazing. Unfortunately, the puzzles themselves range in difficulty from moderate (Shangri-La) to absurdly easy (El Dorado). Even without the help of Arthur, your holographic travelling companion, the game is extremely short simply because it's not very challenging.

Could this beautiful Buddhist tapestry hold the key to acquiring the Legacy?

Still, the story itself is great: it's bold and broad, with a genuine sense of drama and pacing that makes it perfect for an adventure game. The tale is burdened, however, by poorly written dialogue. It's common these days to make fun of the acting in games, but the actors in *LoT* genuinely seemed to be trying; they just had to work their way around lines that don't seem designed to be spoken by a human mouth. I swear I saw Agent 3 wince several times at the lines she was forced to say.

This painting tells of three civilizations, each with part of the Legacy.

The Six Realms of the Buddha tower is in Shangri-La.

Then there's Arthur. Arthur is an artificial intelligence that lives in your time suit. As you play, Arthur spouts off with commentary ranging from interesting historical tidbits to clues to the complete solution for a puzzle. I hate Arthur. The idea of a traveling companion in an adventure game is great — Activision used it quite well in *Zork: Grand Inquisitor*. But Arthur cracks lame jokes, is frequently annoying, and has a voice that can charitably be described as fingernails-across-a-blackboard. He's not good.

More than any other kind of game, adventures rely on great stories. Uncovering *LoT*'s excellent story is your reward for slogging through all the puzzles, but the payoff may not be worth gritting your teeth through the weak dialogue. *The Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time* is a pretty good game, but it could have been much more.

—Keith Sullivan

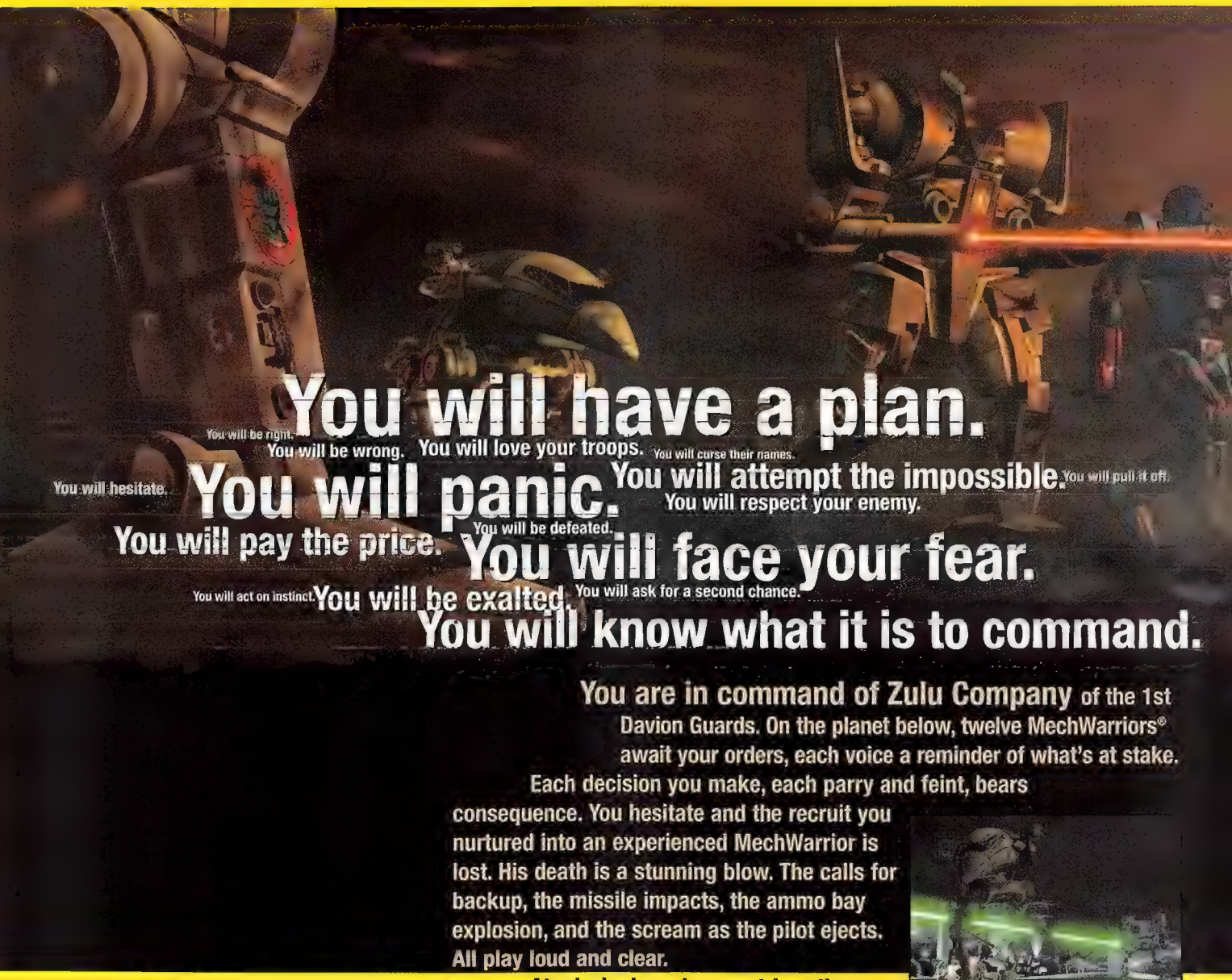
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

75%

HIGHS: Graphics; puzzles well integrated with story line; great story and historical information.

LOWS: Poorly written dialogue; unchallenging, easy puzzles.

BOTTOM LINE: *Legacy of Time* is a good game that could have been much more.


You will have a plan.
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You will be wrong.
You will love your troops.
You will curse their names.
You will hesitate.
You will panic.
You will attempt the impossible.
You will pull it off.
You will respect your enemy.
You will pay the price.
You will be defeated.
You will face your fear.
You will act on instinct.
You will be exalted.
You will ask for a second chance.
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Product Information Number 117

Red Baron II

Win95

Category: Simulation

Developer: Dynamix

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 130MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Win95 compatible sound card	8x CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 213MB hard-drive space; Joystick; 28.8Kbps modem or network for multi-play

Dynamix returns to the Great War with the sequel to one of the best air combat sims ever — and brings us a not-so-great game.

When Dynamix released the original *Red Baron* in 1991, it was the most entertaining, most technically impressive air combat sim on the market. That's one of the reasons the long-awaited sequel is such a disappointment.

Red Baron hit store shelves just a matter of months after MicroProse's *Knights of the Sky*. The MicroProse game was a satisfying World War One sim, but *Red Baron* was head and shoulders above *Knights of the Sky*. Prettier graphics, more options, and better gameplay made it clear that Dynamix — best known at the time for action games like *Arctic Fox* and the original *MechWarrior* — was going to be a formidable player in the air combat stakes. No doubt that's one of the reasons Sierra snapped up Dynamix shortly after *Red Baron*'s release.

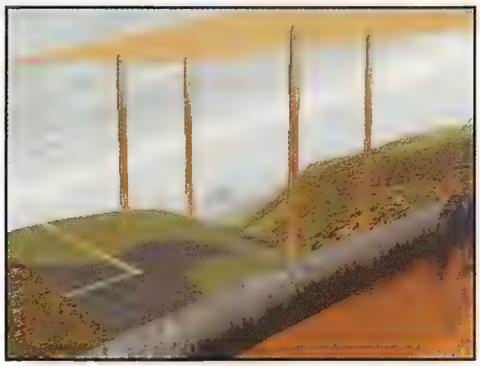
When Sierra announced *Red Baron II*, lots of flight sim nuts were understandably excited. After all, if the new sim turned out to be as impressive today as the original was in 1991, we had something really special to look forward to.

Silent Thunder, Dynamix's sequel to *A-10 Tank Killer*, dampened our spirits a bit; with a ridiculously simplified flight model and no manual at all, it was a lightweight action game masquerading as a simulation. But we weren't terribly worried; we figured Dynamix would take a lot more care with *Red Baron II*, the sequel to its classic, flagship sim.

Apparently, we were wrong.

To be fair, *Red Baron II* isn't entirely devoid of appeal. The simple, in-your-face dogfighting action of a WWI sim is always a welcome break from the push-button complexity of present-day sims. And *RB2* has a few impressive features.

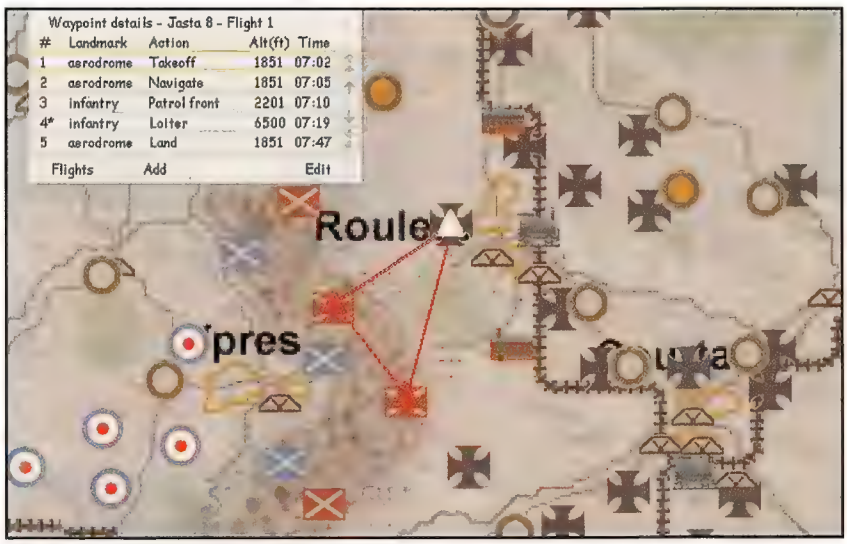
For starters, the virtual cockpit/padlock view works quite well. I've never made much use of the padlock views in simulations of modern aircraft; close-in, turning fights are rare in those games, and when they do crop up, they seldom last very long. But a good padlock view is a real boon in a WWI sim, where extended knife-fights are the order of the day. And *Red Baron*'s padlock is responsive and useful, automatically panning your cockpit view to track not just enemy planes, but wingmen, friendlies, ground threats, and even the nearest airfield. If you're disoriented by trying to maneuver your fighter while looking over your shoulder at a bad guy, a single key gives you a momentary straight-ahead view — you can take a second or two to be sure you're not about to kiss the ground, then snap back to your view of the enemy closing in on your tail.



The panning virtual cockpit view is functional, but a little pixelicious. Note the untextured polygon mountains on the near horizon, even at the highest detail setting.

The sound in *RB2* is very nice. Fly over an enemy base or a larger town, and you'll hear the wail of the air-raid sirens drifting up from below; over small villages, you might hear the tolling of a church bell. The sounds of destruction are satisfyingly visceral; if you land a few good shots on an enemy plane, you'll hear the sound of its wooden struts snapping or its cloth wings tearing and flapping in the wind. And every sound has a distinct position in the overall stereo image, so you can actually tell whether or not the flak is bursting to your right or your left.

Damage is modeled in amazing detail, too. A well-placed burst of lead can have all kinds of results; you might have half a wing shot off or lose part of your tail but remain flying; your engine may die at 1,500 feet, forcing you to look for a good place to set down — or it might just burst into flames, erasing your dashing good looks and ending your career. In one frenetic fight, I put too much stress on my damaged Sopwith Camel and saw the whole upper wing rip right off its struts, leaving me struggling to land a monoplane in enemy territory. Later, a collision with an Albatross left my Spad XIII relatively


Waypoint details - Jasta 8 - Flight 1
Landmark Action Alt(ft) Time
1 aerodrome Takeoff 1851 07:02
2 aerodrome Navigate 1851 07:05
3 infantry Patrol front 2201 07:10
4* infantry Loiter 6500 07:19
5 aerodrome Land 1851 07:47
Flights Add Edit

The flight plan screen lets you edit the waypoints you'll follow in a mission. You can also check out the paths other flights will follow so you know where the friendlies will be.

This looks pretty good for an unaccelerated game, but the lack of support for 3D cards is the least of its problems.

unharmed, but without landing gear (I was killed a few minutes later, so I never got to try landing the Spad on its belly).

If the rest of the game were as good as those few elements, *Red Baron II* would be a worthy sequel. Unfortunately, lots of little problems — and a few big ones — drag the sim down.

RB2 isn't nearly the technical marvel that the original was in its day. Unlike most new flight sims, this one has no support for 3D accelerator cards. *RB2* looks pretty good and runs pretty smoothly for an unaccelerated game, but it can't hold a candle to other current sims like Jane's *Longbow 2* and DID's *F-22 ADF*. You'd think Sierra would understand the importance of supporting 3D accelerators — especially since the company has marketed its own Rendition-based card for quite a while.

Of course, the grainy graphics would be okay if *RB2* was consistently fun to play. But too much of the game is spent looking for a fight. Whole missions can go by without any enemy contact, and when the bad guys do show up, it's generally after a considerable wait. That may be realistic, but it's not a lot of fun. The ability to accelerate game time relieves some of the boredom, but a key feature of the original game is missing here. In *Red Baron*, the simulation automatically switched to normal time when the enemy was nearby; *Red Baron II* doesn't do this. So the typical mission becomes a matter of taking off; hitting the automatic pilot; cranking game time up to four or eight times normal; repeatedly tapping the E key (the padlock command for enemy planes) and watching for the viewpoint to change as the padlock feature centers on an nearby bad guy; then quickly switching back to normal time for the fight. Not a very satisfying way to play.

Another *Red Baron* feature conspicuously absent from *Red Baron II* is the mission recorder. The original game had what still rates as one of the best "VCR" features ever; it let you record an entire mission from start to finish, then play it back from just about any camera angle you could imagine. You could save the viewpoint changes you made, effectively directing the "movie" of your mission; you could even jump into the mission at any point and fly it again.

This kind of full-featured mission recorder is always a bonus in a flight sim, and the fact that the original game had it makes its absence from the sequel all the more disappointing.

As I write this, *Red Baron II*'s multiplayer options seem decidedly broken. To play the game head-to-head, you have to run a separate program — one that will only run in a window, not full-screen. And the first time I tried flying against other gamers via the Internet using Sierra's free WON.NET service, I ran into a real puzzle: As soon as I logged onto WON.NET, the *Red Baron II* multi-player component automatically downloaded two patches, applied them, and restarted. When the list of available connections came up again, the Internet was no longer an option. Did I log onto the Internet only to download a patch that removed Internet play? Not exactly. According to a Sierra tech, there was a problem with one of the patches I downloaded. Uninstalling the game, reinstalling, and downloading a new patch (a patched patch?) did the trick.

Unfortunately, that's not the only bug you'll run into with *Red Baron II*; out of the box, this game is crawling with crashes, lock-ups, and features that don't work properly. At press time, a patch was being prepared to fix the most glaring problems; with any luck, it'll be finished and available by the time you read this. But even working the way it's intended to, *RB2* is a disappointing follow-up to an all-time favorite. Frankly, it might have scored a higher rating if it didn't have such a huge legacy to live up to — and if its developers had been allowed to finish it before it was shipped. As it is, though, if you take away the texture-mapped graphics, rolling terrain, and flaky multi-player support, you've got a sequel that simply isn't as good as the original.

— Dan Bennett

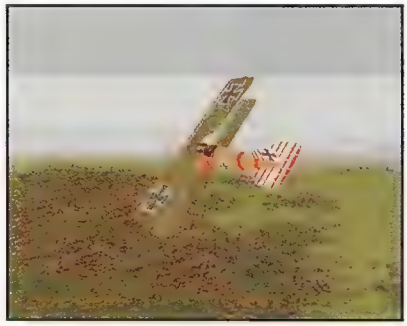
Curse you, Red Baron!

Red Baron II hasn't been out for long, but Sierra says at least **three patches are already in the works** to make it the game it should've been in the first place.

The initial patch, **version 1.02**, was still in the beta-testing stages as we went to press, but it was intended to fix a couple of crash bugs, including the one that strikes when you try to transfer a pilot to a new squadron. It should also remove some other problems: flights circling aimlessly over your base, dead aces being resurrected, and an "Unjam Guns" key that doesn't work properly. This patch will also add a bunch of static cockpit views to the current five.

The next patch will target the game's flight models, adding the option to fly airplanes that perform more like their historical counterparts. (Sierra says the current, less believable, flight models were created when beta testers complained that *RB2* was too hard.)

Finally, word in late January was that the sim *will* get a **3D accelerator patch**. Sierra's making no promises about when it'll be available or what boards it'll support, but we're told 3Dfx support (via Glide) is likely, and the plan is to have the patch out in the second quarter of 1998.



A German Albatross D.II flies the striking colors of the Jasta 8 squadron.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

59%

HIGHS: Good sound effects; damage is modeled in great detail.

LOWS: No 3D support; flaky multi-player; loads of bugs.

BOTTOM LINE: Maybe a patch can make this game worthwhile; until then, you're better off with Empire's *Flying Corps Gold* or the original *Red Baron*.

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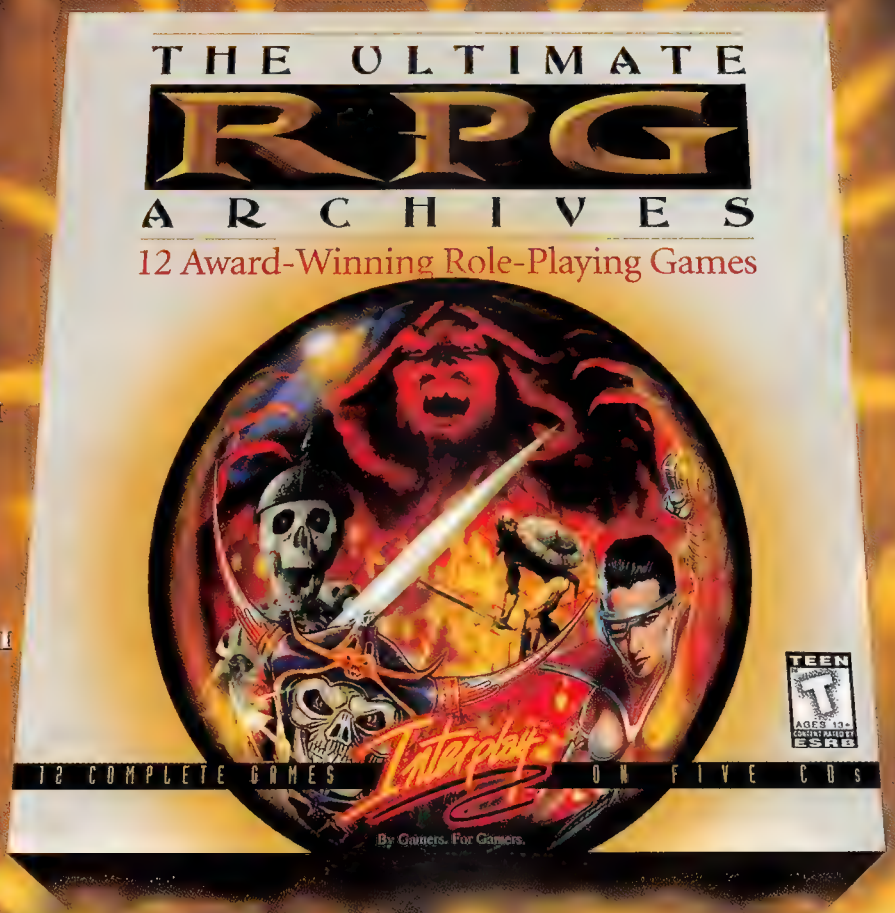

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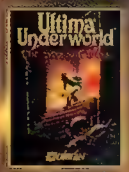

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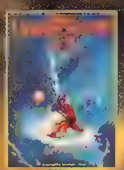

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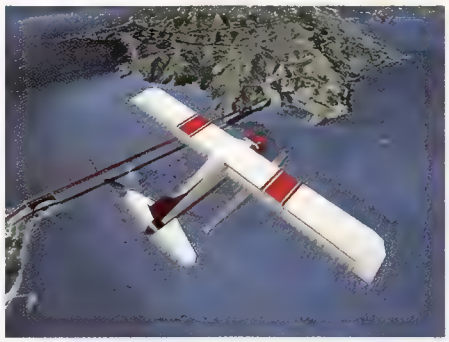

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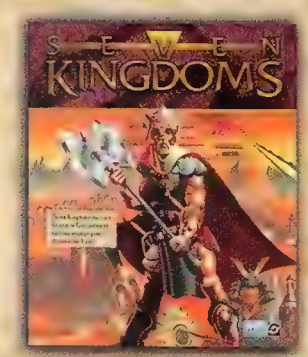

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Product Information Number 194

Descent to Undermountain

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Interplay

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA, 92714 (800) 969-4263

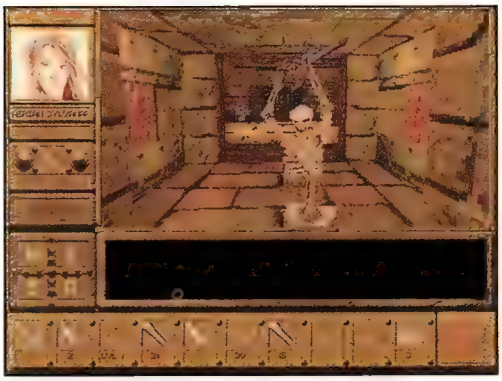
Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 32MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium 166; 200MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card

Eager RPG fans will be disappointed because even though this game has been years in the making...it still feels rushed out the door.

Sometimes, no matter how much you might want to like a game, you just can't recommend it.

Don't get me wrong; *Descent to Undermountain* has a lot going for it. It's based on Advanced Dungeons & Dragons' Forgotten Realms universe; it makes use the same 3D engine that graced *Descent* and *Descent II*; and it comes from Interplay, a company that has brought us some truly great roleplaying games in the past. But from the moment you start your adventure in *Undermountain*'s Yawning Portal Inn, you're subjected to a horrendous game; frustrating, irritating, and downright unpleasant.

Part of the problem is that the *Descent* engine, while great for action games, is far from ideal for an RPG. Control is spongy, at best; a split-second's delay between a movement command and actual onscreen motion translates into a general sluggish feel. Attempting to retreat from oncoming monsters is an exercise in frustration.



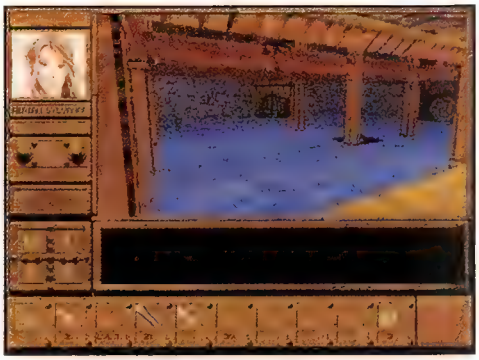
Sometimes the best way to deal with a creature is to make sure it doesn't get too close. Early on, this skeleton can do a heck of a lot of damage.

The game unfolds as a series of tasks given to you by Khelben Blackstaff, the chief mage of the city of Waterdeep. As you progress through the game's plot, you'll receive keys to deeper levels of the dungeon and face increasingly treacherous monsters and traps. Waterdeep itself is represented by a single screen, a map of the city with just four active locations: Blackstaff's tower (where you receive quests); the Marketplace (where you can buy and sell items you find in the dungeons); the Yawning Portal (which houses the dungeon entrance); and the exit (which leads to the mystical world of Windows 95 or DOS). You can meet folks in the Yawning Portal who may have favors to ask of you or who can sell information you might need. As you explore the underground labyrinth, you'll meet monsters and other adventurers you can converse with; some will give you clues to your quest, others will merely threaten your life.

The graphics range from poor to downright shoddy. The different locations have a variety of looks, but even those start to grow old after a while. The movement of monsters is jerky, and along with the gigantic pixels, it makes for an unattractive mix. This is hard to understand; the Descent games built on the same graphics engine weren't nearly this ugly, and they were among the first to support 3D accelerators for smoother animation and a more polished look. Hardware acceleration might have given *Undermountain* a better look and feel, but for some reason it's not supported at all.

The *Descent* engine does allow for a dungeon with lots of structural variety — stairs, ramps, pits, etc. At times you can even traverse the rafters of some caverns. But the physics in *Undermountain* aren't quite there; even gravity feels wrong. If you're running down a hallway and go down a flight of stairs, for instance, you run the risk of taking damage as your forward momentum carries you *over* the steps, rather than *down* the steps.

Interplay's efforts at working in the AD&D rules are commendable, at least. The character creation system is excellent, and other elements of play are impressive (one exception is the fact that you can't control exactly where you want your magic missile spell to go; in AD&D, magic missiles always hit a specific target). It truly feels like you're running an AD&D character through a computer game. Items abound, from weapons to magical armor to potions to spell scrolls. You can cast spells up to AD&D's fourth level, and you can play any of five character races and four classes (with multiple classes allowed, like a mage-thief).



Some areas, like this watery sewer entrance, have a little visual appeal, but they're the exception to the rule.

But those bright spots only make the game more disappointing — it had such *potential*, but ultimately it's just another dungeon hack as you explore the depths of Undermountain, all while using a clunky, slow, ugly game engine. It's obvious Interplay had some trouble with *Undermountain*: it took years in development to yield even this substandard offering, and the final product bears all the marks of being shoved out the door too soon, just to have it over with. If you're a roleplaying fan, you'll appreciate the RPG aspects of the character creation and the incorporation of the Forgotten Realms setting in another computer game — but they won't be enough to save *Descent to Undermountain*.

— Michael Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

40%

HIGHS: Excellent incorporation of the AD&D Forgotten Realms campaign setting and rules.

LOWS: Poor graphics; poor engine; poor story; long load times.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a good idea gone horribly wrong, then apparently rushed out the door too soon.

Jet Moto

Win95

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Singletrac
Publisher:	Sony Interactive Studios America, 10075 Barnes Canyon Road, San Diego, CA 92121 (888) 426-3702

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Pentium 166; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator card; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Put the pedal to the metal and get ready to hover the night away with *Jet Moto*, Sony's latest PlayStation port.

While Sony, Nintendo, and Sega fans beat each other over the head in the war for system supremacy, PC owners can just sit back at their leisure until the *good* stuff from *all* of the consoles trickles in. Thanks to beefed-up performance rates from 3D hardware, publishers are finding that it's at last feasible to do ports of the A-grade titles that sold their consoles. *Jet Moto* is another top-selling PlayStation game that's found its way onto the PC — and it's a darn fine conversion.

Though comparisons will be drawn to the visually similar *Moto Racer*, *Jet Moto*'s unique racing is in a class by itself. Instead of stock motorbikes or jet-skis, you get to straddle a jet-propelled hovercraft — almost like a steerable version of the crotch rockets from SegaSoft's *Rocket Jockey*. Each jet-bike is equipped with five turbo boosts, allowing for some extra oomph when going up hills or sailing off jumps. To contend with the frequent sharp turns, whacking the space bar activates the "magnetic grapple," which can quickly whip you around a pole (or snap your back, if improperly timed).

Since the Jet Motos can float over any surface (including water), the ten tracks will have you rocketing through everything from misty swamps to frigid ice floes. If you're feeling gutsy, you can impress your friends by nailing mid-air barrel rolls or loops, but the abundance of hard things to run into may discourage such foolhardy practices. With twists and turns aplenty, staying in first place becomes a challenge — especially since there are 19 other bloodthirsty racers on the same track. When the tracks start getting narrower, the races usually turn into a mosh-pit of scraping metal and airborne bodies, similar to EA's *Road Rash*. The body count really skyrockets in the "Suicide Tracks," where you're forced to turn a full 180 degrees into a lane of incoming traffic.

This sunny tropical course ends with some gut-wrenching jumps over a crumbled highway. But *man*, what's with all the Pepsi ads?

Don't hit the brakes — just plow through this door, drive through the plantation house, and pop out on the other side. Five seconds saved!

As expected, *Jet Moto* looks exponentially better on an accelerator-equipped PC than in its original PlayStation form (the frame rate in the software renderer is acceptable, but not recommended). One of the more impressive effects is visible in the canyon races, where your environment is clearly reflected in the water. The only downfall is the actual wave-swelling effect, which looks pretty cheesy, and a suspicious number of Pepsi advertisements plastered all over the tracks. Aside from that, *Jet Moto* courteously adds a few perks for PC owners — multiplayer support is in, you can use the mouse in the menus, and you can enter your name with the keyboard (this *should* be a given, but it's scary to see how many ports *don't* include this feature).

Sadly, most of *Jet Moto*'s delightfully hazardous tracks have to be unlocked by placing first on the "Medium" or "Hard" setting. Managing to place in the top five is a steep requirement even on Easy mode, and less experienced gamers may give up after a dozen futile attempts. It's a shame, since racing on the final track is one of the most harrowing, vertigo-instilling experiences you'll ever encounter in a game.

Jet Moto's purposely "floaty" control scheme may make unlocking the tracks all the more difficult, especially if you're using a gamepad. I got the best results with a CH Flightstick Pro, but even with analog control, you'll want to keep a steady hand — pulling all the way to the left or right on an analog stick will result in a wipeout. This may come as a letdown to fans of *Moto Racer*, which featured exceptional analog *and* digital control. Just remember that practice makes perfect.

Aside from control niggles and an overabundance of shameless advertising, *Jet Moto* is an exceptional port of a white-knuckle console racer. If you're ready to follow up the *Moto Racer* experience with some wet-and-wild action, you certainly can't go wrong with this.

—*Colin Williamson*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Great sense of speed; lots of well-designed tracks.

LOWS: Control is a little floaty; tracks are difficult to unlock; lots of annoying ads.

BOTTOM LINE: *Jet Moto* delivers unique and solid racing action.

HOT ROD MAGAZINE

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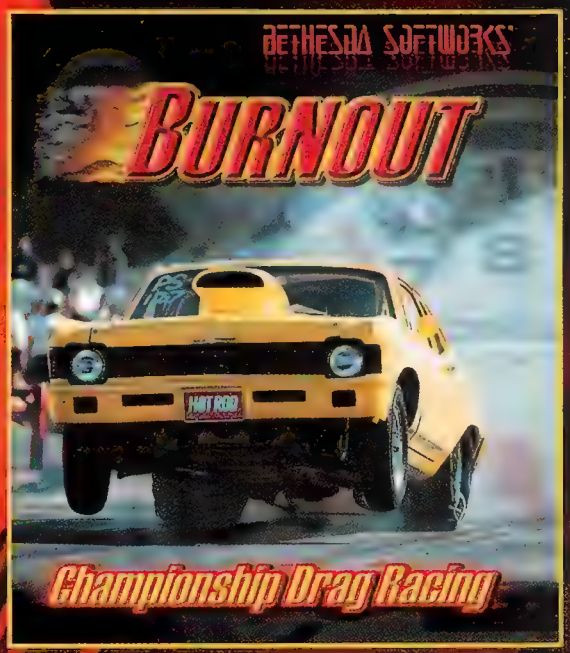

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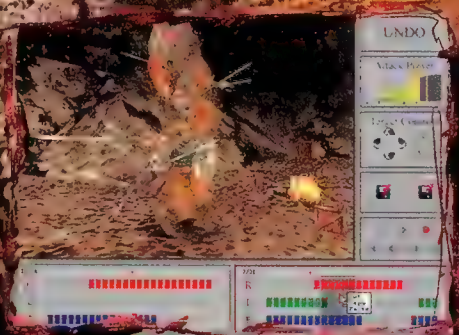

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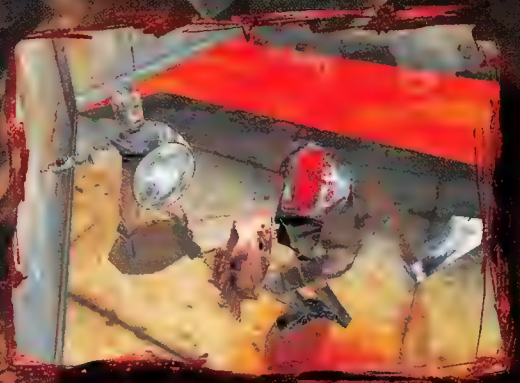

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Product Information Number 384

Waterworld: The Quest for Dry Land

Category: Strategy

Developer: Intelligent Games

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-4263

Required	We Recommend
2x CD drive; P90; 16MB RAM; DOS 6.0 or higher; Super VGA video card; 40MB HD space; Compatible sound card; Mouse	4x CD drive; P166

Can a game based on one of the biggest flops in movie history be any good? In this case, the answer would have to be no.

After a dismal showing at the box office in 1995, the $150 million action flick *Waterworld* became synonymous with the word bust, at least in Hollywood. Now we have *Waterworld: The Quest for Dry Land* to contend with. Can a game based on such a scoffed and ridiculed movie overcome such a drawback? It's possible, but the game would have to be good — real good. Unfortunately, *Waterworld* doesn't deliver nearly enough satisfaction to nullify its namesake.

Though much of the movie's story line is interwoven throughout the game, the only real similarity is its struggle to achieve mediocrity. *Waterworld* is a real-time strategy game that uses the film's milieu as its backdrop. But while the movie was visually unique and impressive, the game (other than the video sequences) looks old and outdated.

Now, I can forgive mediocre graphics if the gameplay is hot, but not only does it look old, it *feels* old. Real-time strategy games that came out two years ago look and feel better than this.

It does try, though. It provides the usual elements of a strategy game through a 22-mission campaign, fought in real-time, and pieced together with video sequences. But each element pales greatly in comparison to any strategy game currently on the market.

On each mission, you control a band of warriors attacking or defending man-made atolls, until you reach your quest — dry land. You'll battle with about a half dozen different races, some more dangerous than others. Anywhere from one to 12 warriors might go on a mission, each equipped with whatever weapons you've been able to purchase from the Trader.

Dealing with the Trader comprises a large aspect of the game. Weapons, from hatchets to Uzis, can at times be purchased, provided you have the resources to barter with. Resources are broken down between water, metals, and dirt, which you need to pick up during the missions.

The story unfolds through cut-scenes from the movie and additional footage using some of the actors that appeared in the film.

The missions take place on these manmade atolls. Unfortunately the sprites waddle around in somewhat unconvincing fashion.

It seems gathering resources is vital, but, for some reason, you can't pick up a fallen comrade's weapon. You can pick up bottles of water, clumps of dirt, and other items a dead person was carrying, but you'd think a flame thrower would be the first thing you'd grab off a dead warrior in the midst of battle.

No matter how much *Waterworld* tries, the outdated feel permeates throughout — and not just in the graphics or the weak AI. You won't find the multi-player support that players have every right to expect from any entry into this genre. You can't even save the game during a mission.

If the polar ice caps melted, and this was the only game to survive, then maybe it wouldn't look so bad. But while the film may be remembered because of its infamous lack of success, the game is destined to wallow in obscurity.

—Joseph Novicki

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

43%

HIGHS: If you liked the movie, there are a lot of cut-scenes for your viewing pleasure.

LOWS: Outdated graphics; poor artificial intelligence; no network support; sucky save game feature.

BOTTOM LINE: *Waterworld* falls short in almost every aspect of the RTS game genre.

Frogger

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: SCEE Cambridge

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive, 50 Dunham Road, Beverly, MA 01915 (617) 746-2903

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; 4x CD drive; P100; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Mouse	8x CD drive; P133; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics or PowerVR2-based graphics accelerator; Gamepad

Everyone's favorite amphibian of old goes under the 3D scalpel — and returns a very changed frog.

As much as I dig kicking back with the old Atari 2600 solely for nostalgia value, after a few minutes of playing with some of my old favorites, I usually wind up shaking my head and thinking "Wow, I can't believe we actually *played* this stuff!." But for many gamers weaned on classics like *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man*, and *Donkey Kong*, the nostalgia trip is a hard one to avoid. As a result, re-issuing old classics has become a booming trend in recent years. While some of the classics have been able to pull through no worse for the wear, most of these old favorites are better off remembered than revisited. With the release of Hasbro Interactive's *Frogger*, we're witness to a new trend that capitalizes on the nostalgic value of an old classic by updating the graphics and enhancing the gameplay. But in this case, *Frogger* is swamped by *too* much flash, and skimps on what made *Frogger* so cool in the first place — simple, addictive gameplay.

The premise of *Frogger* is age-old: get a frog across a busy intersection and a fast-moving river in order reach the relative safety of the river bank — but in this modern day translation, *Frogger* has been re-invented in "glorious" accelerator-enhanced 3D, with a ton of new levels and deeper gameplay. The results are pretty bad.

Hop a ride on the back of this stork, and see if you can figure out where to get off without falling to your doom.

In the original *Frogger*, the control was instantaneous, but in the new *Frogger*, the control suffers from a half-second delay. Leaping from turtle to turtle was never this difficult — just because it *looks* like you'll nail a jump doesn't mean you actually will. The game also has an annoying habit of "shuffling" your frog to the left or the right, so even if you *do* land on a log a few too many pixels to the right, you'll get *pushed off* into the water. It definitely takes practice, and old-school *Frogger* champions will instantly hate it.

A simple graphical facelift for a repetitive game like *Frogger* wouldn't offer much replay value, so the designers have added a ton of new levels. These stages are absolutely gorgeous, with floating platforms and moving objects aplenty. In this new adaptation, the goal is to collect the five baby frogs that have been scattered around each level, so you'll have to pound through each stage several times. But you'll be lucky to get through these levels even once, since *Frogger*'s camera placement is *nasty*. It's located *way* too close to your frog, and doesn't allow you to see any farther than a few virtual feet. With massive scrolling levels, a clock that's always ticking, and fast-moving bad guys, there's plenty of confusion over just what you're supposed to do.

If you're determined to conquer this beast, you'll need trial and error, rote memorization, and a lot of dumb luck. And even then, it's going to be a challenge — a lot of the puzzles require precise timing based on moving objects that can't be seen until you've made a leap of faith, or jumping to logs that zip by way too quickly. The 3D perspective adds another layer of frustration due to poor visual cues and shoddy level design. On the 3D maps, you'll curse the tricky vertical jumps due to the lack of depth; and on novelty stages like the cave level, you'll find unnecessary frustration by a diminished viewing distance. The "Frogger goes Skiing" level is the most abhorrent, since you get the low visibility range and speedy spiders coupled with bottomless pits *and* hideous slip-and-slide control.

Frogger is a paradox. Is the design just poorly thought-out, or was it purposely designed to be one of the most difficult games ever created? There's a very thin line between "challenging" and "frustrating" — and unless you have the patience of a thousand saints, you'll find this sorry mess way too much to put up with. Meanwhile, the generation of gamers who grew up after *Frogger* will wonder what all the fuss was about. As for me, I think I'll head back to the old Atari 2600.

—Colin Williamson

In this sequence, Frogger has to hop down a chute of toxic waste, barrel by barrel. This would be a lot more fun if the clock wasn't ticking.

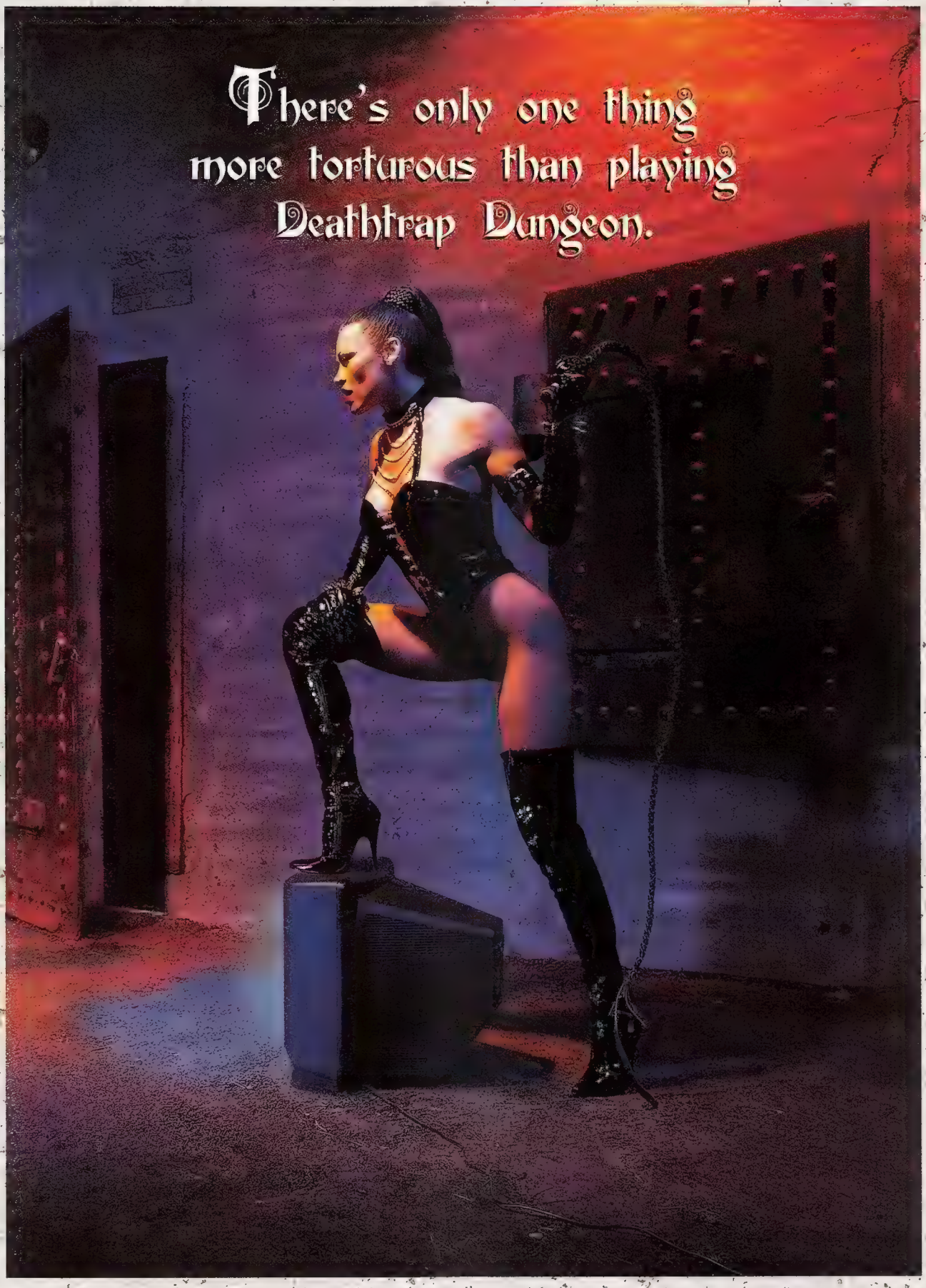
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

32%

HIGHS: Nice graphics; bouncy soundtrack.

LOWS: Control is terrible. You can't see enough of the levels to make head or tails of your surroundings.

BOTTOM LINE: A definite case against the whole retro-gaming craze.


There's only one thing
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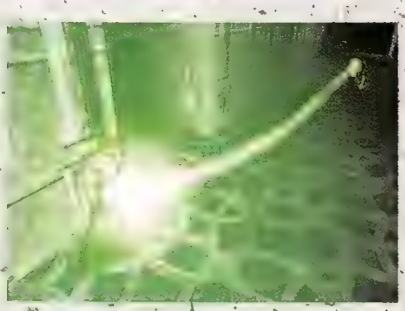

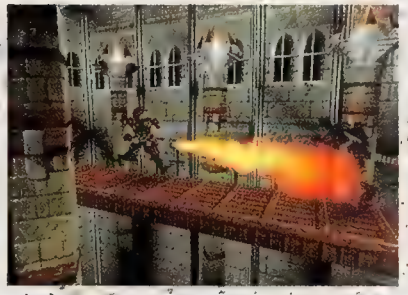

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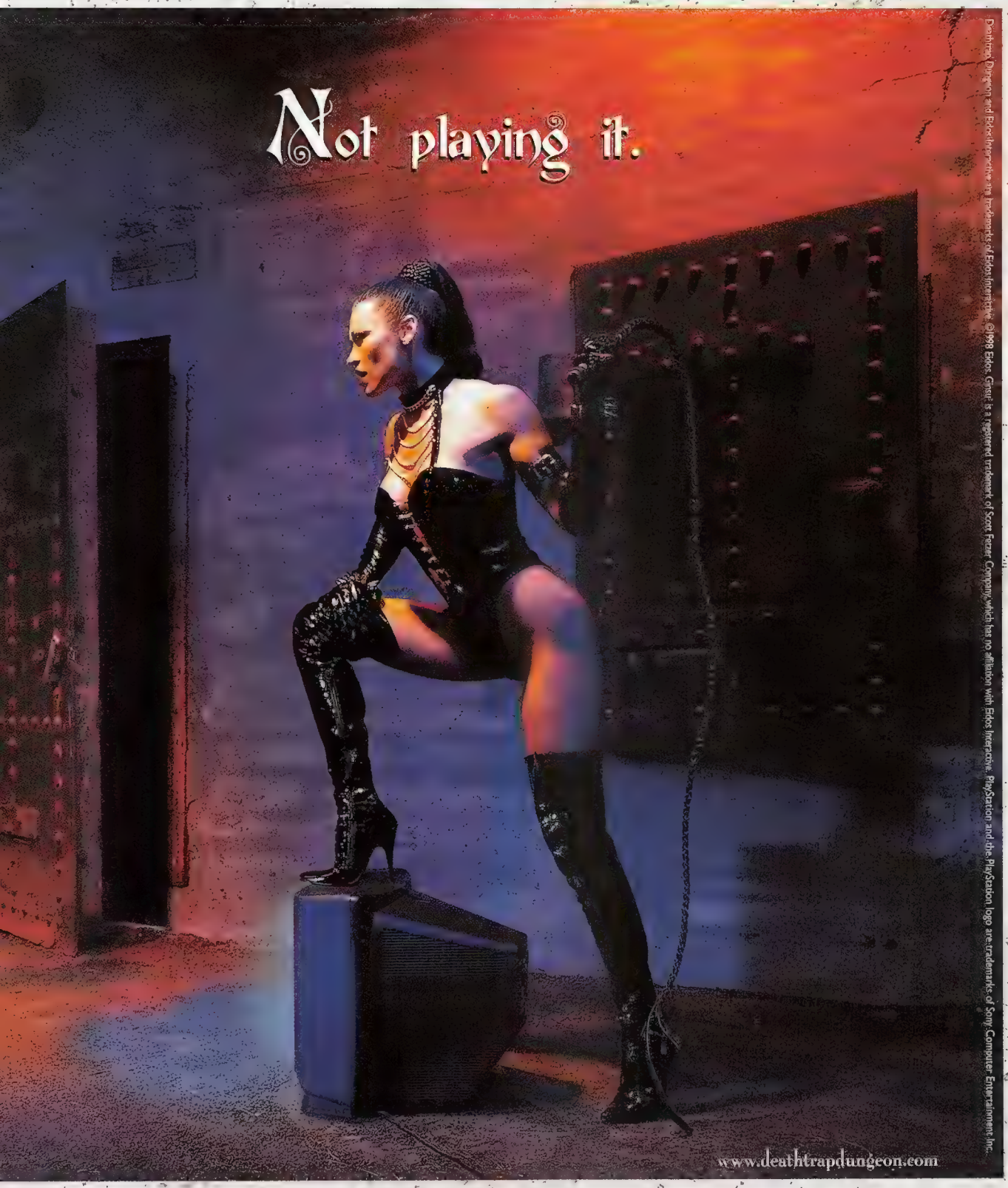

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KESMAI STUDIOS

F/A-18 Korea

Win95

Category: Flight simulation

Developer: Graphic Simulations Corp.

Publisher: Graphic Simulations Corp., 15400 Knoll Trail, #104, Dallas, TX 75248 (800) 580-4725

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; 50MB hard drive space; Windows compatible sound card	Pentium 133; 32MB RAM; Joystick; 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based accelerator

Okay, so it comes from a Mac. But don't hold that against Graphic Simulations' new Hornet sim — it's a deeply satisfying game.

As hard as it is to admit that anything good can come from a Mac, there have been a few cross-over products that can make even the most hardened PC owner acknowledge that an Apple computer might actually be used for something more than making artists feel hip. A couple of years ago *F/A-18 Hornet 3.0* did exactly that by delivering one of the most accurate and detailed simulations around. Developed by Graphic Simulations, a longtime Mac stalwart, *Hornet* has slowly gained a loyal following among PC users, and now *F/A-18 Korea* has arrived to parlay that loyalty into something bigger. For the most part, *Korea* is an enhanced and expanded version of *Hornet 3.0*. But a good deal has been done to make it feel more like a new package than a rehash, although some of the flaws and limitations of the predecessor still bedevil it.

As the title indicates, this is a simulation based on the F/A-18 multi-role strike fighter, which deploys from both airfields and carriers. And one trip to the cockpit makes it clear you're playing with the big boys now. The avionics suite is about as close as you can get to spot on, with the TDC, displays, and radar sub-modes recreated in exacting detail. The functionality, power, and limitations of the sensor systems is remarkable, and delivers a consistent authenticity to the whole shebang.

Not only does everything look and act as it should thanks to terrific cockpit art and thought-out controls, there is a logical set of view modes that helps computer pilots view the action just like their real-life counterparts. The padlock view can lock on anything, and the quick view and virtual cockpit are both designed for maximum situational awareness. The realism continues, for the most part, to the flight modeling. Overall, it feels quite good, with a true sense of speed and world physics. Some of the plane's performance, however, feels a bit off. Fuel consumption and load modeling could be tighter. But, overall, this bird flies right, ensuring that everything from catapult launches to carrier landings is the thrill — and challenge — it should be.

The most notable enhancement over *Hornet 3.0* is the graphics. This time around, Graphic Simulations has added 3Dfx support but it isn't simply a tacked-on 3D patch; it's a true overhauling of the graphics engine. To keep the frame rate consistent in software, shaded polygons, rather than textures, provide smooth frame rates with or without acceleration. With 3D acceleration on, *Korea*'s graphics are a big leap over *Hornet*, with detailed object modeling and fluid terrain. Sadly, these graphic flourishes don't extend to the front end which has the same clunky knee-board design as the old version.

This front end is one of the problem areas that bring *Korea* down. The mission data is lean, presented with a small, useless map that vaguely resembles the mission areas. There is no mission planner for the main campaign, and take-charge types will be disheartened to hear that waypoints may not be edited or even viewed. The only thing that can be modified prior to a flight is the weapon loadout. Additionally, *Korea* is sorely lacking in its campaign mode and mission design. It has a very lackluster campaign game: choose one of four missions, repeat six times — and that's the campaign. Only 28 true missions are included, but a strong and flexible mission planner that can be used to create new missions (not campaign missions) helps make up for this loss. Four-player Internet and LAN play also extends the appeal, as do the new Korean landscapes. (Hawaii and Nevada are also mapped.)

The detail and the depth of the game world in *F/A-18 Korea* is extremely satisfying, even with the mediocre mission planning and campaign elements. Graphic Simulations is within reach of creating a game that will be as loved by the hardcore crowd as *Falcon* or *Su-27*. With any luck, they'll achieve that goal in the next incarnation.

—T. Liam McDonald

The world is not only richly populated with targets, threats, and neutrals, but the integration of 3D objects and terrain is flawless.

Even without terrain shading, the view looks good from the cockpit.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Good flight modeling. Sharp graphics. Detailed manual and training videos.

LOWS: Weak features (interface, campaign structure, mission control) carried on from *Hornet 3.0*.

BOTTOM LINE: A solid sim with a rich game world and awesome avionics.

Faery Tale Adventure II: Halls of the Dead

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: The Dreamer's Guild

Publisher: Encore Software, 5420 W. 83rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90045-3204 (310) 342-0600

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; 37MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

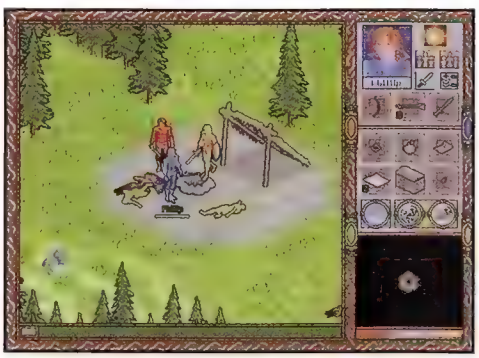
It's great that there are so many RPGs to play nowadays — but that also means the genre will have its share of mediocre games.

The past year has been a good one for roleplaying gamers. Unfortunately, a game like *Faery Tale Adventure II: Halls of the Dead* has little place alongside recent hits like *Fallout* and *Might and Magic VI*.

The story centers on the same three brothers who starred in the original *Faery Tale Adventure*. Following their exploits in the previous game, Julian, Phillip, and Kevin are visited by three magical mares, who ask the brothers to help save the land that the mares are sworn to protect. Accepting the challenge, the three brothers travel with the magical beasts to Farr — where the mares are instantly turned to stone and the three brothers are left on their own. That's where you come in; it's your job to figure out how to save Farr.

The story is pretty basic, and so is the gameplay. Using a top-down perspective reminiscent of the more recent Ultima games, you control one brother at a time. The other two stay close by, but they don't obey your commands — which means while they're wandering around, they'll frequently come between you and a place you want to move to. Sometimes they'll get stuck behind a building or shrub as you're walking through town. So you either have to stop and wait for them to catch up, or take control of the offending brother yourself and move him where you want him (fortunately, you can hop from brother to brother effortlessly). Meanwhile, items in your inventory appear along the right-hand side of the screen — but there are only six slots for carrying items. The only way to carry more is to find containers like sacks or trunks.

Everything in the game, from the inventory to spells to conversations, is handled with the same simple interface. If you want to use an inventory item, drag its icon onto the object you want to use it on or the person you want to give it to. Learn a new spell, and you can cast it by dragging its icon over the target. Engage another character in conversation, and you get a menu of icons that represent ideas like "Shop" or "Weapon," which you can drag onto the character to ask questions. All of the dialog is done in CD audio that plays directly off the disc, so conversations are broken up by a lot of pauses as the game loads the appropriate sound file.



Those relentless goblins can be annoying when you're trying to get a good night's sleep.

The mouse controls movement; either click on the spot you want to move to, or double-click to switch into a continuous mode in which the brothers will follow the cursor. Movement is in real-time, but as soon as you encounter enemies and get into combat, the game switches into turn-based mode, letting you take your time but only giving you control over whichever brother is active. This has its drawbacks — you can have Phillip hang back and fire his bow from a distance, but you won't be able to keep Kevin from getting in the way. And if you aren't controlling the magic-using brother, he won't cast spells to save his life. It can be pretty frustrating.

You'll find plenty of weapons and items in town without having to purchase them.

The graphics are beautiful, however, with lots of variety in terrain as you travel the world. The colors are bright, and the detail is great; characters' weapons change depending on what they have equipped. Unfortunately, a poorly designed interface and a tired story line dull the experience. Looks like hungry roleplaying fans will have to wait for the next offering to come along.

— *Michael Wolf*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

55%

HIGHS: Beautiful graphics; large game world; variety of items, creatures, landscapes.

LOWS: Annoying and difficult interface, character movement, combat.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a die-hard RPG fan, you might enjoy it. Otherwise, wait for the better ones that are in the works.

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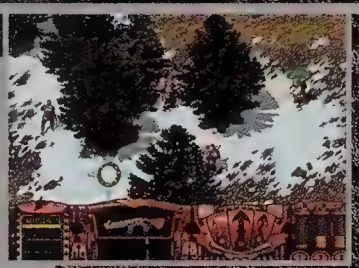

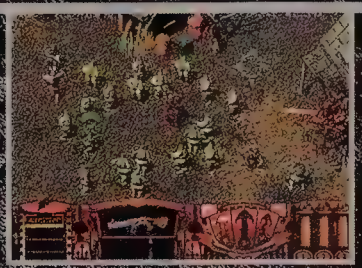

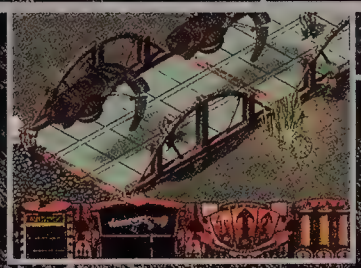

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Product Information Number 261

Test Drive 4

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: The Pitbull Syndicate, Ltd.

Publisher: Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., Suite 500, San Jose, CA 95129 (408) 296-8400

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 2X CD-ROM drive; 220MB hard-drive space	Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx-based accelerator; 260MB hard-drive space

Test Drive 4 is a tale of two games — one good, one bad. Which one you get depends on how much hardware your PC's packing.

After trying to get down and dirty with the disappointing spin-off *Test Drive Off Road*, Accolade's Test Drive series has finally returned to its pavement-pounding roots with the high-octane racer *Test Drive 4*. Like the original *Test Drive*, *TD4* is an automaniac's nirvana, simulating a range of throbbing, cylinder-packed supercars. But while the cars may be the pinnacle of engineering, your enjoyment of *TD4* will be determined by another kind of engine — the one purring under your computer's hood.

In *Test Drive 4*, there are five present-day supercars, including a 1994 Jaguar XJ 220 and a 1998 Dodge Viper, and five classic "muscle cars" like the Shelby Cobra 427 and 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 454. Though the game is primarily an arcade racer, each of the cars have been modeled to reflect their real-world attributes and, for the most part, each has a distinctive feel with differing rates of acceleration, top speeds, and road handling.

The six tracks are fun and offer a nice mix of locales from the mountains of Sweden to the busy streets of Tokyo. The San Francisco track, with its suicide hill, particularly stands out. If you finish in first place, you will unlock a second version of the same track, allowing you to race in the opposite direction, at night.

Test Drive 4 offers several modes of competition. There are four "Cups" that have varying rules (number of races, cumulative time vs. points awarded, etc.), a drag race to challenge your gear-shifting skills, and a Duel where one player races and the second player goes up against his "ghost." Network play is supported for as many as eight, but surprisingly, you can't mix and match players running the 3Dfx and software versions. Even more troubling is the fact that we had a fair amount of trouble getting a network game of *TD4* up and running, as players were often dropped from the game as soon as everyone entered a track. More often than not, it would take several attempts to set up the game before it could be played.

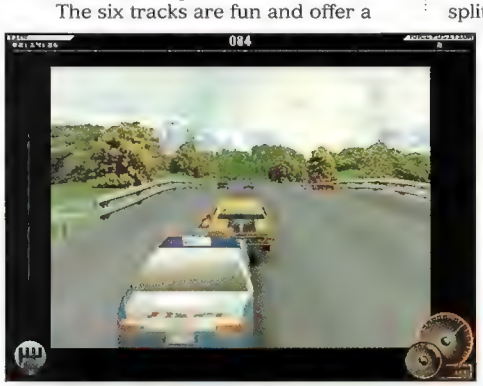
There are even more troubling features off the track, and one of the worst is the user interface. Annoying doesn't begin to describe it. None of the settings are saved between sessions, so each time you load it up, you'll have to put the game back the way you like it, re-selecting your preferred method of control and any other features you want to toggle (e.g. traffic off). During the Cup competitions, there is no way to save between races, so you'll either have to run through them all in one sitting, or leave the program running until you're ready to come back to it.

Out on the track, *Test Drive 4* has a split personality. If ever there was a game to convince you of the need for a 3Dfx accelerator, this is it. With hardware support the game is beautiful and the control solid, mainly due to the steady frame rates. Run the game in software, however, and the difference is staggering. In low-resolution (320x240), the control is decent and the frame rates are serviceable, but the pixels are so large it's scary. The high-res mode (640x480) improves the visuals, but any sense of control over your vehicle is lost, even with the recommended system of a Pentium 166. Both software modes only support 256 colors, which gives the graphics a very washed-out appearance.

While the 3D accelerated version is definitely more enjoyable, there are other niggling things. The lack of a map overlay makes getting around the tracks an exercise in trial and error. The tracks offer no indication of upcoming turns, and the forward viewing distance is limited. Another frustration is the AI; the computer cars have a habit of only driving as well as you do. If you get to the front, the slightest error will result in five cars (all of the races have only six competitors) breezing past you — but the reverse is also true. Smacking into a wall and loitering for 20 seconds will have no effect on your ability to catch up to the pack from what should be utter defeat.

As a whole, *Test Drive 4* is a fun addition to a classic series, but suffers greatly from poorly implemented features, lackluster software performance, and touchy controls. Based on the wildly different experience between the software-only and 3Dfx versions, the final score of this review must be adjusted according to the hardware you've got under the hood. If your machine boasts a 3Dfx board, bump it up by 15 points — it's a fun game with nice graphics and an addictive sense of speed. But if you have anything less than a Pentium II supercharging your machine, the sluggish gameplay and lackluster graphics are just too much of a pain to put up with.

—Rob Smolka



If you're not fast enough to outrun 'em, the fuzz will pull you over. At speeds of nearly 200mph, you can rest assured that you'll be paying some steep fines.

Racing with the traffic option turned on can be very hazardous to your health.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

63%

HIGHS: Great 3Dfx support; cool tracks; cooler cars.

LOWS: Lousy software-only performance; terrible interface; canned AI competition.

BOTTOM LINE: *Test Drive 4* is a slap in the face to all of those who aren't on the cutting edge of technology.

FIFA: Road to World Cup 98

Category: Sports

Developer: EA Sports

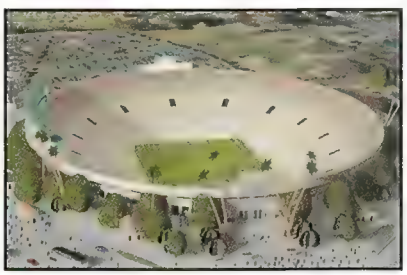
Publisher: EA Sports, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo CA 94404 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM	Eight-speed CD-ROM; Pentium 166 or higher; 32MB RAM

EA Sports' latest FIFA game is the best yet, and the hottest sports sim of the year so far.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

I never thought the day would come when I — a red-blooded, apple pie-eating, baseball cap-wearing American — would enjoy playing a computer soccer game more than a computer football game. Horror of horrors, that day has arrived. Not only is EA Sports' *FIFA: Road to World Cup 98* one of the best sports games around, it's far and away more fun than any of those American football games floating around — even the ones produced by EA Sports. What could have caused this turnaround that borders on heresy? A fantastic game, that's what.



The variety and locale of the stadiums gives the game an international feel.

Ouch! That's going to hurt in the morning. With its impressive 3D graphics and non-stop action, *FIFA 98* is a must for any fan of sports games.

Graphically, *FIFA 98* is untouched in the realm of sports games when running with a 3Dfx-compatible 3D card (and it's even pretty snazzy when running in software-only mode). The rendering of the players is outstanding, and obvious effort went into making them as individual as possible. But EA took it a step further by putting in loads of little touches that really help set this game apart, like the animations when the goalie leaps for an incoming shot. If only EA Sports applied the same loving attention to detail to its football games....

The game also shines with regard to the way it presents the various arenas and weather. Creating realistic weather effects has always been a bit of a problem for sports games (basically, brown grass equals rain), but EA has put a concerted effort into making it look like you really are playing at night in the sleet or snow. Extra atmosphere is provided by superb commentary from the two-man booth, which follows the action without a misste; soccer fans will be pleased to see that all their favorite club and national teams have been accurately reproduced, complete with the correct uniforms and player names — a strength that goes with owning the FIFA license.

But a good sports game is not just about pretty pictures and stats, and the good news is that *FIFA 98*'s real strength is in the gameplay. The players behave realistically, and the ball physics are accurately modelled. It all contributes to a simulation that truly looks and feels like the real thing.

The game also turns in an excellent performance when it comes to multi-player action. Multi-player *FIFA* is fast, fun, and extremely competitive. For my money, the only sports game superior in multi-player action is *NHL 98*, our Sports Game of the Year for 1997, so *FIFA 98* is in good company.

Get that out of here! The solid AI ensures a frenzied match right down to the end.

No game is perfect, though, and *FIFA 98* does have a couple of minor faults. Learning the controls can be hard work, mainly because it takes a while to properly come to grips with all of the moves. You can certainly enjoy the game using only the basic maneuvers, but it's an absolute blast once you know how to execute bicycle kicks, 360-degree spins, and the like.

Another problem occurs occasionally with the AI. The way the computer responds is usually realistic, but every now and then it'll do something stupid. On one occasion, the opposing team drove all the way down to my goal, then then turned and kicked the ball back down to their side of the field. Incidents like this happen only rarely, but when they do, it's a little off-putting.

I doubt soccer as a sport will ever surpass football for popularity in America, but with the help of *FIFA 98*, it's certainly going to give the old pigskin a run for its money on the PC.

—William Harms

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Fantastic graphics; addictive multi-player action; a blast to play.

LOWS: Something of a steep learning curve; AI falters every now and then.

BOTTOM LINE: Quite simply, this is the best soccer simulation on PC.

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Product Information Number 328

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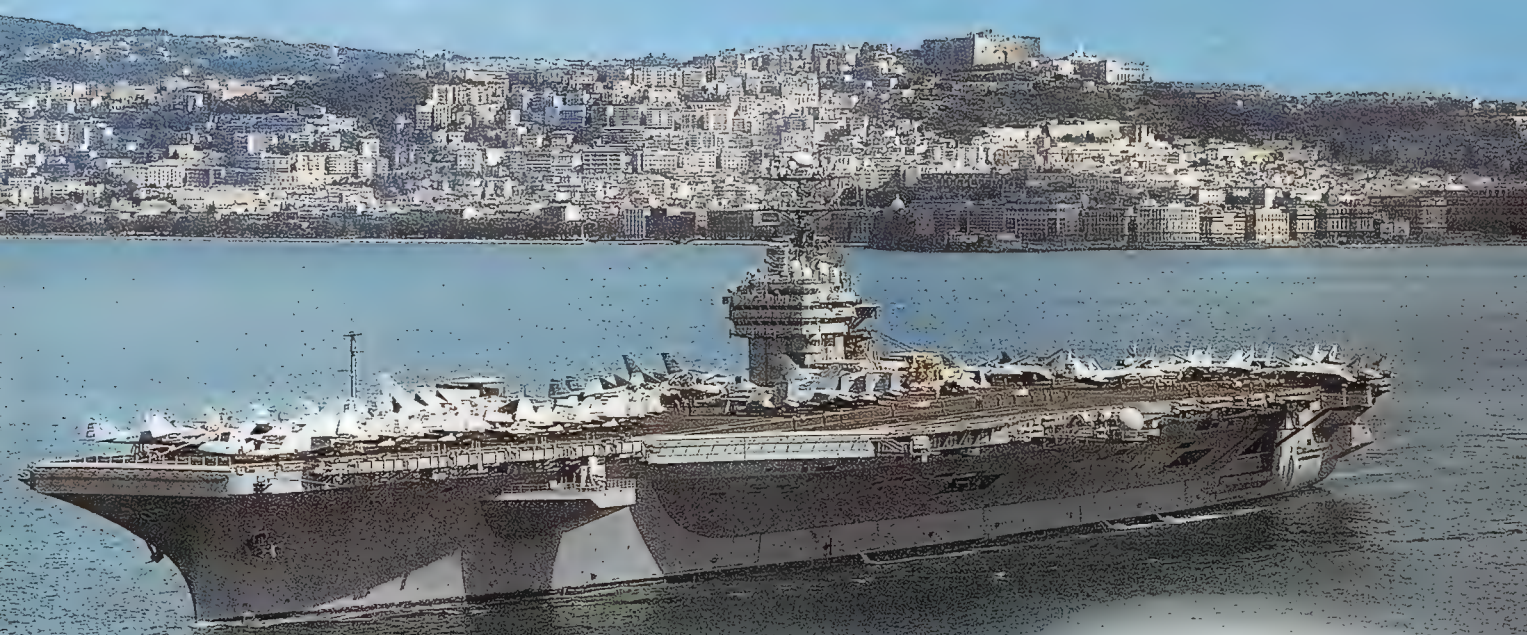

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Product Information Number 340

Nightmare Creatures

Win95

Category: Action adventure

Developer: Kalisto

Publisher: Activision, 3100 Ocean Park Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 255-2050

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 3D accelerator; Supported sound card; Gamepad

With a creepy atmosphere and killer combat, even a couple of significant flaws cannot derail this excellent console port.

Activision's *Nightmare Creatures* is the latest addition to a long line of console-to-PC translations — but don't turn the page yet! This one fares much better than most. In fact, a couple of flaws aside, this is an excellent game with outstanding graphics and several little touches that really add to the atmosphere.

Nightmare Creatures is an action packed fright-fest set in London in the year 1834. A very evil man by the name of Adam Crowley heads the Brotherhood of Hecate, an organization comprised of lots of other very evil men. They discover some lost documents that explain how to create a race of "supermen" by manipulating viruses, then mix the potent concoction and release it on the poor citizens of London. But instead of getting supermen, they get monsters — lots of them. As chaos reigns over a terrorized city, it's up to you — as either Father Ignatius Blackward or Nadia F. — to battle Crowley and his waves of horrible creatures in order to restore London to its original state. The two hero characters use different weapons and fighting techniques — Blackward wields a staff with blunt blades on the ends while Nadia uses a razor sharp sword (perfect for carving up filet of werewolf).

The monsters are smarter than your average baddie — they will learn your fighting technique and use it against you.

The action plays out from a third-person perspective similar to *Tomb Raider II*, with a somewhat free-roaming camera following slightly above and behind the player. Unlike the point-and-shoot action of *Tomb Raider II* however, the combat in *Nightmare Creatures* focuses on hand-to-hand fighting. For the most part, the controls hold up well, even when you are being attacked from multiple directions. Sometimes, however, you'll get turned around, and it can be a bit difficult to right yourself (especially while being gouged in the back), but the biggest control problems lie with the jump feature. Primarily, there should have been a better backward jump — while you can escape from an enemy by doing little jumps backward, they'll be right on top of you if they are fast enough — and they normally are. A big Lara Croft-style back-flip would have worked much better.

The second, and larger fault, is when the game calls for you to jump from object to object to traverse some sort of hazard. Even after I was used to the distance involved, I still missed on occasion. Without a decent save game feature (you can only save at the end of a level, a tiresome indication of the game's console origins), I had to replay the entire level, which became extremely annoying, to say the least. An in-level save feature would have softened the blow of the fussy controls, but without it, you'll be back to the start with every misstep.

Those faults aside, *Nightmare Creatures* is a very enjoyable game. Whether running with 3D acceleration or through software only, the graphics are nice and tight, with none of the clipping problems that plagued both of the *Tomb Raider* games. (No matter how many times I tried, I could never get half of my body to disappear into a wall.) Additionally, the creatures are nicely rendered, as are the various lights, tables, carriages and other paraphernalia that decorates the landscape. But beyond the graphics, what this game really excels at is atmosphere.

Each of the levels is extremely well constructed and complementary to the horror theme, and the result is one of the most spine-tingling games I've played in a long time. A couple of the levels featured thunderstorms, with rain (which varies in intensity), thunder, and lightning. The lightning is used very nicely, allowing you to catch glimpses of monsters hiding in the darkness, and even features a couple of direct lightning strikes. Numerous little touches add to the creepiness, such as one level where you stumble across a horse lying in the street. As you round the horse, you see a werewolf happily gorging itself on the entrails. It was refreshing to see a monster actually *doing* something instead of just lurking around. They're pretty smart, too — at the outset they're quite easy to kill, but as the game progresses, they gradually get smarter. If you keep using the same attack, they'll learn how to evade it, for example, and will even coordinate to attack you from multiple sides if there is more than one baddie in the area.

Nightmare Creatures **takes full advantage of its 3D graphics, creating a spooky setting for your battles with various monsters. Watch the heads fly!**

It's really too bad that *Nightmare Creatures* fell short in two simple, but significant areas — that lack of a useful save feature, and the occasionally twitchy controls. The game had the potential to be a modern classic; instead, it's a great game with a couple of annoying niggles — oh, and one of the coolest cemeteries ever to grace a computer screen.

—William Harms

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Constant action, incredible graphics, and awesome atmosphere.

LOWS: Poor control in certain situations; has a bad case of consolitis with no save game feature.

BOTTOM LINE: Even with a few unforgivable faults, this is a bloody blast to play.

Win95

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Action

Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants

Publisher: GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (800) 434-2637

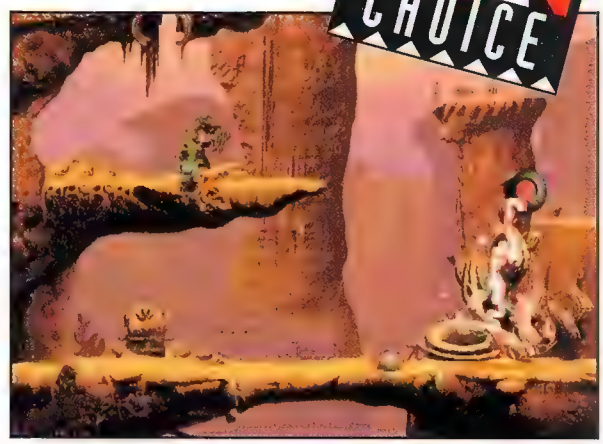
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Pentium 90; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; Super VGA graphics	Supported sound card; Gamepad

Jump left to right in this fun throwback to the days when side-scrollers ruled the world.

Side-scrollers have long been considered one of the unfortunate carry-overs from the early days of computer gaming. Not only have we seen this style of gameplay since time began, we continue to see it with nauseating regularity. The reason? By and large, it's one of the easiest types of games to program, and publishers have abused this fact with hordes of lousy titles that have poisoned the whole genre. But if the efforts of the developer Oddworld Inhabitants are any indication, this old warhorse of a genre still has some life left in it. Their charming and innovative *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* reminds us that any genre can be revived if you put enough care and creativity into it.

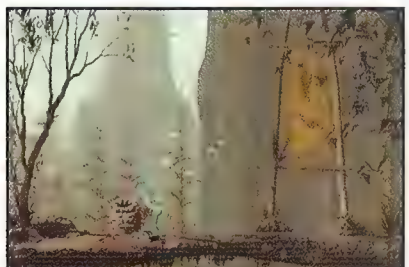
In *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*, you play Abe, a Mudokon (a funny looking humanoid type creature) working at the Rupture Farms meat processing plant. Abe is relatively happy with his lot until he discovers a plan to reverse shrinking profits by turning the Mudokon workers into processed meat munchies. Needless to say, once this discovery is made, Abe's job satisfaction takes a dramatic tumble, and he goes on the lam to try to save his race from becoming snack food.

GT Interactive has been making every claim in the book regarding *Oddworld*, and has gone so far as to say it combines every genre of gaming into one incredible experience. In truth, it doesn't go nearly that far. *Oddworld* is a side-scroller in the truest sense. Just as in nearly every side-scroller since the beginning of time, you'll run, jump, dangle from ledges, and sneak through shadows as you gradually make your way from left to right. However, the care and attention paid to this simple formula is what makes *Abe's Oddysee* such a treat. Abe also has something called Gamespeak, a series of eight different words, whistles, and bodily noise used to give orders to other Mudokons to move so that you can rescue them. There are also some "Simon Says"-type puzzles where you must repeat the whistles in sequence.



Abe gets blasted by a probe in a "no chanting" zone.

Although *Abe's Oddysee*'s game design isn't terribly original, it makes up for that with quality production values. The level designs are very good; throughout them all, you can expect to find a smart mix of puzzles that will allow Abe to sneak past enemy guards (they're armed, you're not). The plot is paper-thin, but compared to most games in this genre, it's a welcome addition that is tied into each level quite well. As more pieces of the puzzle are revealed, this simple story contributes to a genuine sense of progress each time you move forward.



If you sneak past the next screen, you won't wake up the sleeping Slig.

Additionally, the graphics help give *Abe's Oddysee* an incredible charm that hasn't been seen in a side-scroller in some time. *Abe's Oddysee* boasts colored lighting effects, 3D modeled characters, and smooth transitions between the levels and cut scenes. Even better, the artistic design of the characters and sets is delightful. The fluid animations and charming characters had me completely hooked during an early scene that required me to sneak through the shadows behind a guard. The motions of the characters combined with the perfectly-matched music made me think of Bugs Bunny sneaking up on Elmer Fudd. I was entranced and knew that, review or no review, I *had* to finish this game.

As enjoyable as it is, *Abe's Oddysee* is not without its problems. Like many titles originally designed for consoles, *Abe's Oddysee* has a console-style save game system. The game is automatically saved at designated points, and if you die (which you will, frequently) you're sent back to that last point. To be fair, the game does give you unlimited lives and the save points aren't that far apart, but unless you're a gamepad guru, you can expect to play many of the nastier portions over and over.

Despite GT Interactive's assertions to the contrary, *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* isn't a revolutionary game. It's still a side-scroller, with all that that implies. If you wouldn't be caught dead playing a game of *Sonic*, *Oddworld* offers little appeal. However, as side-scrollers go, *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is one of the best. Even better, Oddworld Inhabitants has promised that this is only the first of a "quintology," so fans of action titles can look forward to more adventures of Abe and his Oddworld crew for a long time to come.

—Keith Sullivan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Loaded with personality; great level design; good sense of humor throughout.

LOWS: Poor save game feature; some repetitive moments just like in any side-scroller.

BOTTOM LINE: For action fans, it's impossible to not be charmed by Abe and his friends.

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Product Information Number 242

Beat the House 2

Win95

Category: Casino Simulation

Developer: Cetasoft

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 553-6678

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; Supported sound card

The best casino simulation around finally earns a sequel, and in the process, gets royally fleeced at the Craps table.

It's sad when it happens. A great game gets overhauled, some improvements are made, but along the way something goes wrong — terribly, terribly wrong. That seems to be what happened to *Beat the House 2*, a competent but somewhat disappointing sequel to one of the greatest casino sims around. For computer gambling fans, the original *Beat the House* was one of the most accurate and colorful representations of casino gaming. While *Beat the House 2* offers even more games to play, the accuracy and authority of the original is missing due to a few glaring errors that change how the Craps table pays off. In one fell swoop, *BTH* goes from being the best Craps program to one of the worst.

If you don't care about Craps, *BTH2* does offer a good variety and accuracy that would be worthy of its namesake. It offers the classic casino games Roulette, Blackjack, Video Poker, Slots, Mini-Baccarat, and Sklansky's Poker Challenge. These last two games are new additions to *BTH*. The Slots section also offers six new machines. Each is a different style of a slot machine you might find in a casino, such as progressive, spin again, and multi-line payoff machines.

One thing you could say about the original *BTH* was that it was well thought-out. It was the only casino sim I've seen that handles Craps correctly. In Craps, there are exceptions when placing a Free Odds bet. Suffice it to say, the new and improved *BTH2* no longer handles this correctly — even though the manual that comes with *BTH2* recognizes these exceptions, and suggests you use them. The fact that it was done properly in the original game and screwed up for the sequel is baffling. Even more baffling is that there are further errors. In Craps, players have the opportunity to place a bet called the come bet, yet in *BTH2*, it doesn't pay off correctly at all during a come out roll.

Beat the House 2 **has a new casino idea in Sklansky's Poker Challenge; it is a bit like playing a mixture of standard video poker and real poker.**

Craps wasn't the only thing the original *BTH* did right. It also provided excellent tutorials, which I'm glad *BTH2* held on to. The tutorials come in the form of online coaching and a manual that has garnered a fair amount of praise. The manual, written by Avery Cardoza, is one of the best I've seen. It not only describes how to play each game, but also offers excellent advice and strategy. Cardoza himself has gone on to publish his own games — *Avery Cardoza's Casino* and *100 Slots*. If only Interplay had kept him to beta-test *BTH2*'s Craps table.

The ugly face of *BTH2*: a Craps table that blows it on paying out come bets on the come out roll, and no longer allows for the free odds exceptions.

The most unusual addition to *BTH2* is Sklansky's Poker Challenge. This is the brainchild of David Sklansky, a professional gambler and author. You're not likely to find this in any casino, but it is fun. Like video poker, you play against the computer, but it plays more like a real game of poker than standard video poker. There are two flavors to this machine — a Texas Hold 'Em version and 7-Card Stud. Several hands are dealt where you can see the first two or three cards. It's then a matter of picking out which hand you think will be the winner. I found it a novel variant on the poker theme and quite addictive. I'd like to know the house advantage; it seemed very tough, even playing the recommended way.

The original *BTH* was by far the best casino sim on the market, and because of the fact that casino games don't tend to evolve much, it can still hold its own, even today. The sequel however, doesn't offer any improvement, and with the craps program in the crapper, and Sklansky's Poker Challenge being the only new thing, I'd say that sticking with the original *BTH* is a much better bet than gambling on this sequel.

—Joseph Novicki

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Great tutorial and online coach; Sklansky's Poker Challenge is fun.

LOWS: The Craps game is so bad it's no longer worth playing.

BOTTOM LINE: *BTH2* has excellent tutorials, and most of the games are well done, but Craps lovers will be disappointed.

Battlespire

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Bethesda Softworks

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Drive, Suite 120, Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300

Required	We Recommend
2x CD drive; P133; 16MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or greater; Super VGA/VESA 2.0 compliant video card; 150MB HD space; Mouse	8x CD drive; P166/200 or higher; 32MB RAM; Supported sound card

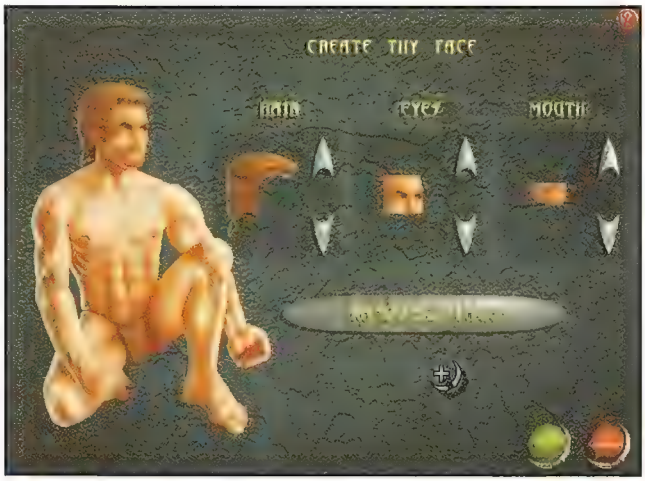
With slow frame rates and some technical glitches, the promise of a fun romp through the worlds of Tamriel is just another fantasy.

If you amass all the promises made by Bethesda to its hearty legion of fans about *Battlespire*, you might be under the impression that this is the CRPG masterpiece of the decade. A "tighter" Elder Scrolls game that could be completed in under 50 hours? High-res and high-color graphics? 3Dfx support? Even multi-player gaming via the Internet? Well, before you dungeon-crawlin' mages get your hopes up, put down your spellbook for a moment and take heed... there's some disappointing details you must know prior to entering the 'spire.

Battlespire is the first entry in the new The Elder Scrolls (TES) "Legend" series — a line of PC games designed to preserve the celebrated fantasy universe of Tamriel, but with a focus on more combat, smaller environments, fewer characters, and shorter gameplay. True RPG fans looking for another open-ended epic like *TES: Arena* or *TES: Daggerfall* will have to wait for the third chapter, entitled *TES: Morrowind* (working title), due out sometime in late 1999.

It's not the premise behind the Legend series that is disturbing. In fact, in theory, it's perfect for novice or mainstream gamers who want a taste of what a full-fledged CRPG is like with a bit of action and adventure rolled into the mix. No, it's because *Battlespire* looks and plays terribly, has an out-dated look thanks to its pixelated graphics, and is slow, choppy, and buggy. And despite what you see on the print ads for the game, Bethesda reneged on its pledge to support 3Dfx chipsets.

Before elaborating on *Battlespire*'s significant weaknesses, let's quickly go over some of the game's basic features and admirable qualities. The player assumes the role of an apprentice Battlemage, put to a test in an outer-worldly training citadel known as "Battlespire," a floating fortress supported by magical anchors in the ethereal mists beyond Tamriel. You're teleported into the 'spire and learn that the double-crossing Jagar Tharn has struck a deal with the evil Daedra Prince, Mehrunes Dagon, to kill off or possess all new students. This threat seriously reduces your chances of achieving the rank of a Tamrielean Imperial Guard, unless you can defeat the malevolent minions of the dark side and destroy the Daedra Prince once and for all. Oh, and you also may want to get back home, too.



In *Battlespire*, you can customize just about anything you want to in your character, including the shape of his mouth.

As with *Daggerfall*, *Battlespire* features a very thorough and highly customizable character creation system. Before tackling the first goal (to find and connect the magical anchors, then locate the key to exit), gamers must select from an ample set of options to make their game unique: gender, race, hairstyle, facial features, and character class.

The player interface is also very customizable, with some new features added to the tried-and-true TES formula. The view of the *Battlespire* environment is from a first-person perspective, and the gamer can choose a full-screen window or a command-bar format at the bottom of the screen. Although you can assign

With the emphasis on more combat and a tighter focus on story, you can cross swords till you're heart's content in *Battlespire* — even in a deathmatch via the 'net.

Unlike the wide-open plains and sprawling kingdoms of *Daggerfall*, most of *Battlespire*'s environments are dark and dreary dungeons. There are a few outdoor levels, including one that's underwater.

the keys to your liking, the best combination is using the mouse for your head movement and the four arrow keys with your left hand for navigation (similar to *Quake*'s +mlook or *Quake II*'s freelook).

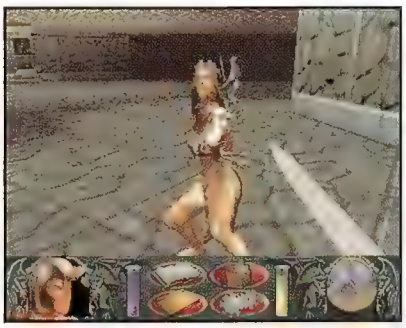
During combat, you hold down the right mouse button and, depending on your weapon of choice, you can sweep across the screen using the mouse to simulate its movement (a sword can slash side-to-side, up-and-down, diagonally, or even thrust forward). The left mouse button is used as an all-purpose "action" button for selecting a character to talk to, choosing the dialog, using objects in your inventory, or picking up objects in the environment. The Enter key must be held down in order to get a cursor on the screen — this is essential in picking up important objects or selecting options on the command bar, such as the spellbook, inventory, auto-map, etc. A nice touch to *Battlespire* is the ability to assign any of the F1 to F8 keys as hot-keys for spells and inventory, and keep in mind that spells can also be tailored to individual tastes, of course.

Character interaction is very well done, with convincing voice-over acting and relevant dialog trees for many of the odd creatures roaming about. Unlike the wide variety of environments of *Daggerfall*, the majority of *Battlespire*'s levels are in dungeons. There are a few outdoor areas including castles, taverns, homes, large windmills; one memorable level takes place almost entirely on water.

This time around, Bethesda adds Super VGA high-color graphics to its proprietary Xngine (used in previous titles like *Daggerfall*, *SkyNet*, and *X-Car*). The resolution can be set to low-res (320x240) mode for gamers without a powerful system, or high-res graphics at 640x480.

And so the problems arise....

The system requirements on the box state a Pentium 133 or higher is required to play, but while testing *Battlespire* on two separate Pentium II machines (one a 266MHZ and the other a 300MHZ with 64MB RAM), the game ran quite slow and choppy in many areas. The frame rate dropped considerably when launching the game on a P166 laptop with 32MB RAM. Walking back and forth from point A to B takes a painfully long time, and turning around and fighting monsters proved extremely choppy on the P166. While swinging your ax or spear, the game may hang for a second or two, and the next thing you know, you're staring at the ceiling! And this is after successfully installing the *Battlespire* patch (v.1.3), by the way.



If you're a fan of spell-casting over sword play, you can summon creatures during combat for additional help.

This sluggish performance is just plain unacceptable nowadays. Forget for a moment about Bethesda's decision not to use hardware acceleration — why it didn't opt to take advantage of even Windows 95 and/or DirectX5.0 is beyond me. The numerous patches that followed *Arena* and *Daggerfall* were a testament that the Xngine has its share of problems, and it seems we can expect more of the same this time around. In *Battlespire*, there are plenty of clipping and collision problems, with monsters walking through walls and objects, and players can get "stuck" during each of the seven levels.

The detailed 3D graphics in *Battlespire* look quite good from far away, with limited but reasonable character animations. Plus, the new light sourcing effects are impressive. But, up close... I haven't seen pixels this big in a long time. Put it this way — the first time I approached a Vermai monster face-to-face, I thought had I mistakenly selected the low-res mode.

For the first time in a TES adventure, there is multi-player support via IPX/LAN and Internet play for up to eight players over Kali or through Mplayer. In fact, the Mplayer software is available on the *Battlespire* CD-ROM, and gamers can play for free on the network within minutes. Games include team versus computer, team versus team, or straight deathmatch. Any of the seven levels from the single-player game can be selected for all types of play, or you can select from the additional seven multi-player Deathmatch maps or Capture the Flag levels provided. I tested out different playing options on Mplayer (multiple players, with or without monsters, various spell points, time limit, points limit, kill limit, etc.), and it was quite easy to arrange and play a multi-player game — simply join or create a room and chat with players as they stop by. I did find it confusing, however, that you can spend a good five minutes customizing the appearance of your character but everybody looks the same during the game (characters are only differentiated by color).

After playing *Battlespire*, my initial impression was that the game was just shipped too early, with likely pressure to get the game out of the door before the holidays. Now, I feel it's just a case of using dated tools to create a modern game. There's no argument that Julian LeFay and the folks at Bethesda are a talented group, and it's evident they squeezed as much out of the Xngine as they could, but the faults in *Battlespire* are too obvious and numerous to be excusable. Let's just hope the next game in the TES universe — a third-person perspective action/adventure hybrid dubbed *Redguard* — will satisfy the dedicated residents of Tamriel later this year.

—Marc Saltzman

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

58%

HIGHS: Character design system; level design; multi-player.

LOWS: Slow, choppy, buggy; ugly up-close; doesn't take advantage of Win95 or DirectX support; no 3D support; difficult levels.

BOTTOM LINE: Wait until *Battlespire* is in the bargain bin. Until then, it ain't worth it.

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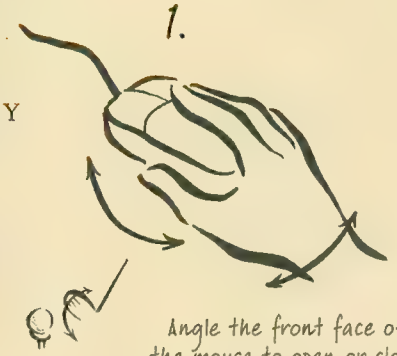
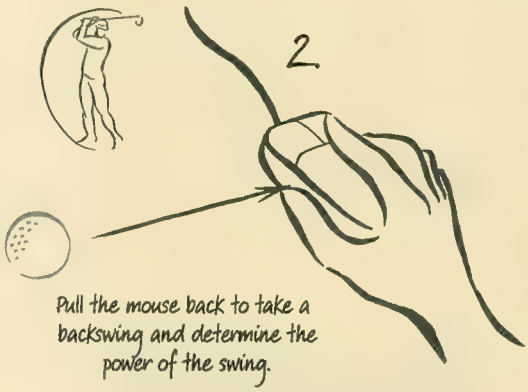


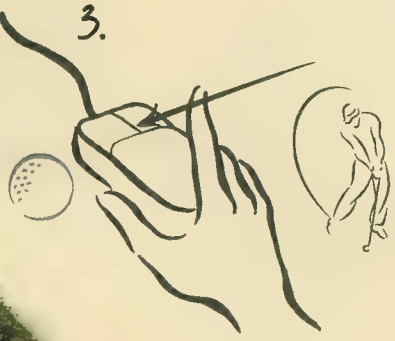
Angle the front face of the mouse to open or close the club and set the curvature of the shot.

2.

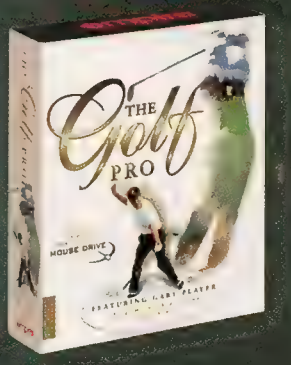


Pull the mouse back to take a backswing and determine the power of the swing.

3.



Move the mouse forward and hit through the ball, timing the release of the mouse button before contact to set the loft and backspin of the shot.



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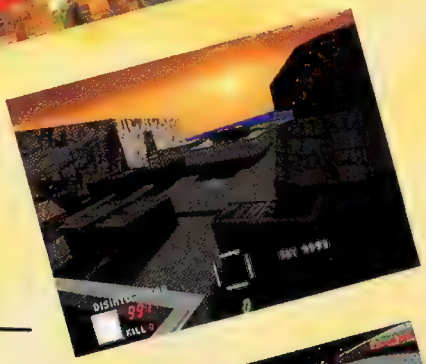

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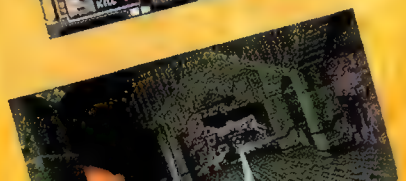

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Diamond Viper 330	438
Diamond Monster 3D	385
Hercules Stringray 128	375
Matrox Mystique 220 / Matrox M3D	252
Matrox Millenium II	91.7
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If PC gaming hardware were a religion, this would be Mecca. We just call it...

The Hard Stuff

Welcome back, true believers!

Occasionally, we get a letter asking why we don't use the same benchmark tests in our reviews that dozens of other magazines use.

It's true that part of the reason we use the bootMarks is because *boot*, the hardcore hardware magazine responsible for them, is a sister publication of *PC Gamer*. But there's more to it than that: the bootMarks are a much more practical measure of performance than those other benchmarks.

Gamers know pretty darn well that the market is saturated with video cards. The plethora of 2D, 2D/3D and 3D-only accelerators can be intimidating and a bit confusing — especially since every new video card is touted as the one that beats all the others.

That's why we have benchmarks: Keep an eye on the test scores we provide in our video card and system reviews, and pretty soon you'll have a good idea of how each product compares to its real competition. While frame-rates and polygon-crunching speed aren't the *only* things a video accelerator should be judged by, they are tangible, and they're good indicators of gaming performance.

Some magazines use mysterious tests which spit out meaningless, arbitrary numbers; meaningless because tests based on code you'd never see in an actual game are easy to manipulate. For example, hardware makers can (and some will) optimize a video card's drivers specifically to ensure a high score in those abstract tests — but that score may have nothing to do with how well the card performs in real-world gaming.

The programs in the bootMark suite, on the other hand, are based on engines used in actual, commercial games and applications, so bootMark scores are *real* indications of how hardware performs with *real* programs.

You'll notice a couple of new Direct3D benchmarks: *X* and *Forsaken*. Along with the editors of *boot*, we chose to adopt these tests because they're based on feature-rich, demanding games that will really give a 3D accelerator a workout — and also because the scores they provide are easy to understand; they're average frame rates attained in a thorough, scripted demo of a real game, rather than numbers created through an arcane series of abstract algorithms.

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You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication, *boot*. Between our rigorous testing and the thorough bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

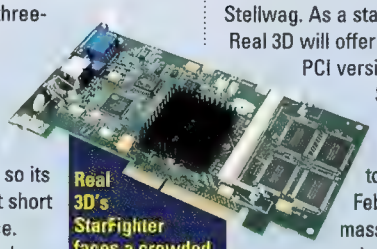
Lockheed Martin Launches Into Home PCs

Real 3D's new graphics card is based on the hot Intel740 chip, but can it compete in a flooded market?

In 1954, Lockheed Martin's F-104 StarFighter became the first aircraft to reach mach 2, twice the speed of sound. It was an amazingly futuristic plane for its time, and its thin wing span earned it the loving nickname, "missile with a man in it."

In 1998, the StarFighter name is once again being used by Lockheed, this time on a 2D/3D accelerator. Real 3D, a former subsidiary of Lockheed and now a separate corporation owned 80 percent by Lockheed and 20 percent by Intel, hopes to break speed records once again.

The StarFighter's processor is the much anticipated Intel740 chip, Intel's first official entry into the world of graphics accelerators. The 740 is nothing new to Real 3D, which helped design it. The company's history involves developing three-dimensional computer imaging equipment for military use, so its certainly not short in experience.



Real 3D's StarFighter faces a crowded graphics card market, but with the crunching power and image quality of the Intel740 chip, it just may make a niche for itself.

Although Real 3D played a major role in creating the 740, the chip belongs to Intel. According to Real 3D's Chris Stellwag, this has resulted in a unique relationship between the two companies. Real 3D's StarFighter will be the first implementation of the 740 to be available to the public, but Intel can market the chip to any graphics card maker; Real 3D will accept royalties on each sale. "So we want them to sell it to as many [card manufacturers] as they can," said Stellwag.

Besides end users, Real 3D is targeting the StarFighter at the OEM segment. "OEMs will be interested in the AGP part," said Stellwag. As a stand alone card, Real 3D will offer both AGP and PCI versions of the StarFighter.

The StarFighter was to be released on February 17, with mass production ramping up by the end of March. That would put it on store shelves right next to video cards based on 3Dfx's next-generation Voodoo 2, a fact that hasn't eluded Real 3D. So how does the Intel740 plan to compete in a market whose mind share is so thoroughly dominated by 3Dfx?

The Intel740 graphics chip was developed partially by Real 3D.

"[Voodoo 2] is a 3D-only card;" Stellwag says, "the StarFighter is a 2D, 3D, and video solution." He says the power of the StarFighter will be considerable.

"I think you'll be surprised by the performance," he says. Early buzz about the Intel740 focused on the fact that it's an Intel graphics accelerator, but its capabilities have been overlooked. Real 3D expects the StarFighter to outperform everything on the market today in speed as well as in the often overlooked arena of image quality, which, according to Stellwag, should be outstanding.

The StarFighter won't use a proprietary API; Real 3D says it's designed to be a Direct3D accelerator and will include support for OpenGL.

Diamond Unleashes More Monsters

Two new Monster Sound cards offer affordable and feature-rich audio.

Last April, Diamond's Monster Sound infused the then-stagnant PC audio market with something new and exciting: convincing, 3D positional sound through two speakers. Built on Aureal's A3D audio chip, the Monster Sound tricks your ears into "hearing" sounds from above, below, and all around your head. Besides the A3D standard, Monster Sound supports Microsoft's DirectSound3D.

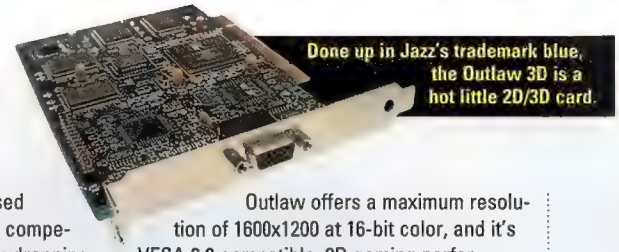
After a slow start, the A3D positional audio solution was gradually embraced by game developers. Now several titles support the standard, including LucasArts' *Jedi Knight* and Activision's *Heavy Gear* and *Interstate '76*.

In light of that growing support, Diamond has announced changes to the Monster Sound line to include two Monster Sound products at different price points. The $99 M80 was released in late January; it's a stripped-down version of Diamond's original Monster Sound, offering hardware accelerated positional audio; it comes with a bundled version of *Jedi Knight*.

On the other end of the spectrum is the MX200; due out in March at $149, it adds 64-voice hardware wavetable music synthesis, support for as many as four speakers, and more. Its bundle will include *Jedi Knight* and two other games that hadn't been determined at press time.

Jazz Outlaw 3D

PC GAMER EDITOR'S CHOICE



Done up in Jazz's trademark blue, the Outlaw 3D is a hot little 2D/3D card.

Company: Jazz Multimedia
www.jazzmm.com

Phone: (408) 727-8900 (TO ORDER)
(408) 764-2340 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $149.99 (M.S.R.P. 4MB REVIEWED)

Mmm, the Rendition V2200.... Sorry! We're drooling over the visual quality of the new Jazz Outlaw 3D, featuring Rendition's V2200 RISC-based 2D/3D accelerator chip. The V2000 family is aggressively tearing down everyone's preconceived notions of the price/performance ratio in combined 2D and 3D acceleration, and Jazz's new card is proof. At around the same price point as cards using the vastly inferior Cirrus Laguna 3D or S3 ViRGE chipsets, the Rendition V2100 and V2200-based boards give you something the competition doesn't: eye-popping, jaw-dropping acceleration.

The Jazz Outlaw 3D — at least, the 4MB version provided for our review — is the first implementation we've seen of the startling V2200. The major difference between it and the V2100 is that the V2200 chip will run efficiently at higher clock speeds than the V2100, which results in a small but significant performance difference.

Installing the card required a bit of a song and dance, because the video drivers were split between two directories on the install CD (and the install file didn't point to them properly); we had to specify the file locations manually. Fortunately, though, Jazz had already updated the drivers (and the BIOS) just before this review went to press.

Windows acceleration was snappy, and the desktop was crisp. The Outlaw offers a maximum resolution of 1600x1200 at 16-bit color, and it's VESA 2.0 compatible. 2D gaming performance was above average.

Testing was a pleasure. Direct3D games looked magnificent and ran very well on the Outlaw 3D. Besides the bootMarks tests, we threw a plethora of games at it with equal success: *G-Police*, *Jedi Knight*, and *Heavy Gear* were flawless.

The streamlined Jazz Outlaw 3D doesn't come with a bundle or anything in the way of extras (like TV input or output); this is strictly for PC applications and games. But keeping that in mind and factoring in the excellent price, the Outlaw 3D is highly recommended as a base 2D/3D card.

bootMarks

DIRECT3D TESTS:
X bootMark: 46.500fps
***Forsaken* bootMark:** 49.6fps
***Terramarks*:** 957

2D GAMING TESTS:
***Quake* bootMark:**
14.5fps (640x480); 11.5fps (800x600)
***Duke Nukem 3D* bootMark:**
58fps (640x480); 47fps (800x600)

ACCELERATED *QUAKE* TEST:
***VQuake* bootMark:**
37.4fps (640x480)

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Excellent quality; fast, cost-effective 2D/3D acceleration; good software support.

LOWS: Early driver problems, but most have been ironed out already through updated drivers recently released by Jazz. Doesn't come with any extras like TV input or output.

BOTTOM LINE: The Jazz Outlaw 3D is a lot of 3D accelerator for a surprisingly low price.

CH GameStick 14

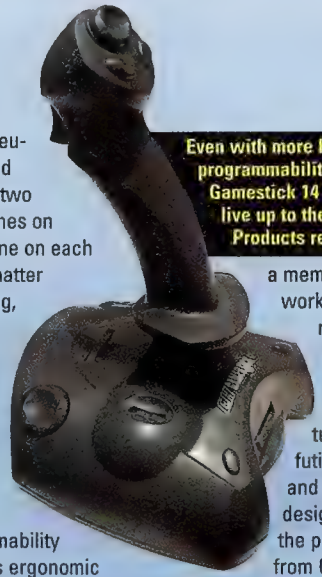
Company: CH Products
www.chproducts.com

Phone: (760) 598-2518 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $69.95 (M.S.R.P.)

CH Products makes great joysticks. From the original Flightstick to the F-16 Combat Stick, CH's controllers have always been top-flight products, with sturdy construction and lots of buttons and options.

The Gamestick 14 lives up to the standard with a rugged build, silky-smooth movement, and plenty of options. Unfortunately, the feel of the stick itself isn't what we've come to expect from CH. The base is just too small; it tends to tip during demanding gameplay. The stick's design is symmetrical, so it's equally comfortable for left- or right-handed gamers — but that's not saying much. Several buttons are available, but none of them are placed for easy access. The throttle slider is on the back of the base, just under your wrist — and awkward place to reach for the throttle while maneuvering to shake the bad guys off your tail. The two buttons and hat switches on the base are placed one on each side of the base. No matter what hand you're using, you'll have to reach around with the other hand to activate functions you assign to the opposite side. In other words, this stick seems to be built for superhuman appendages.



Even with more buttons and programmability, the Gamestick 14 doesn't quite live up to the CH Products reputation.

The stick's programmability could have made up for its ergonomic shortcomings, but it falls flat on its face. Using CH's Joystick Control Center, you can create templates for games that assign a variety of keyboard commands to each of the joystick's buttons, and you can switch between five different modes during gameplay. That means you could conceivably have 160 different keyboard commands assigned to the joystick. That's impressive, but the Control Center itself isn't very intuitive, and worst of all, the joystick doesn't have its own memory. Once you assign your key commands, you have to load the template into a memory-resident program to make it work. And many games just won't recognize the memory-resident program (*Wing Commander Prophecy* is one notable example), so your programming turns out to be an exercise in futility. With iffy programmability and an uncharacteristically bad design, this stick simply isn't worth the price; it's a rare disappointment from CH Products.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The stick has a smooth feel; responsive control; programmable.

LOWS: Programmability doesn't always work; unstable base; awkward grip; poor throttle and button placement.

BOTTOM LINE: Programmability makes it a better stick than the recent CH Gamestick, but there are still better joysticks for the price.

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Product Information Number 200

Wireless PC @ TV

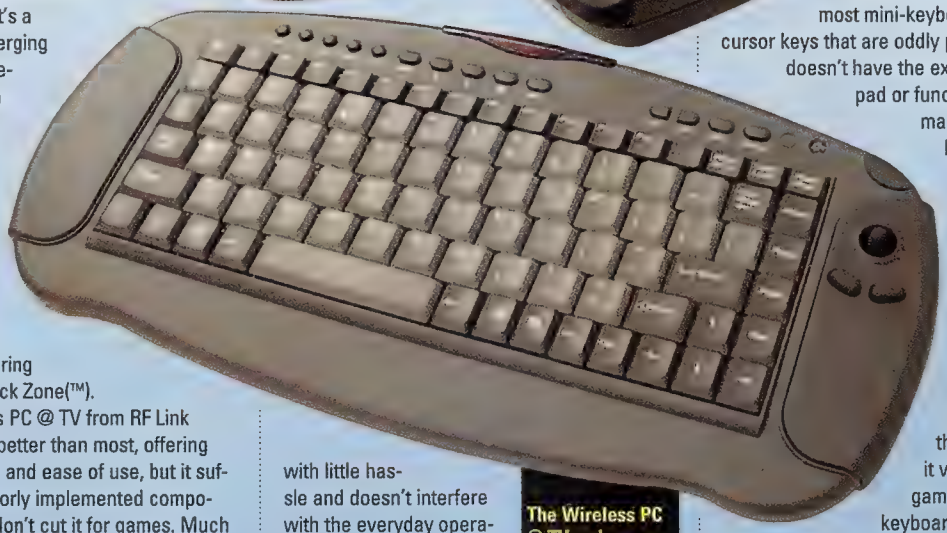
Win95

Company: RF Link
www.rflinktech.com

Phone: (310) 787-2328 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $599 (M.S.R.P.)

The PC @ TV can transform your TV into a PC monitor, but a few lackluster features will leave gamers out in the cold.



During the past few months, we've seen more and more products that attempt to bring the PC experience out of the office and into the living room. The goal is to get the whole family involved in gaming, web surfing, and general PC use by removing the intimidating and limiting barriers of traditional desktop systems. It's a noble effort, but merging today's state-of-the-art computers with the antiquated technology of current televisions has been problematic at best, and most of these products are dangerously close to entering the Useless Gimmick Zone(™).

The Wireless PC @ TV from RF Link straddles the gulf better than most, offering good performance and ease of use, but it suffers from a few poorly implemented components that simply don't cut it for games. Much like the AITech PC/TV Airlink reviewed in the March 1998 issue of *PC Gamer*, the PC @ TV is a complete kit that includes a wireless receiver and transmitter that broadcasts the video and audio output of your PC to your television and a wireless keyboard/mouse combo for lounge-chair web-surfing. Additionally, a hardware scan converter (to turn your computer's video signal into something your television can display) rounds out the kit.

Getting the PC @ TV up and running is painless enough (you don't need to take apart your computer or worry about installing new video drivers), but it can take a fair amount of time. The PC @ TV's tangle of wires, adapters, and components can be a bit confusing. Fortunately, a clear and concise instruction manual walks you through every step of the process without much trouble.

Once it's all together, the PC @ TV can switch between standard PC use or TV display with little hassle and doesn't interfere with the everyday operation of your PC. The wireless receiver and transmitter send a strong, clean signal from your PC to a TV as far away as 100 feet (it even works through walls), and the hardware scan converter ensures you won't encounter any of the frustrating incompatibilities that can occur with software solutions. Another nice touch is a keyboard switch box that lets you choose between your PC's standard keyboard and mouse and the wireless keyboard/mouse combo without turning off your computer.

The Wireless PC @ TV makes a case for TV-based web-surfing, but a few poorly implemented features will send gamers back to their home offices.

Unfortunately, the PC @ TV's scan converter can only perform in standard 640x480 mode, requiring users to change their resolution in Windows 95 and some games before heading to the couch. While the limited resolution is worth a grumble for those who own a lot of Super VGA games, the PC @ TV's performance proved to be just fine for web-surfing and general PC use, delivering output as crisp and clean as you could expect from a television. For gaming applications, however, the PC @ TV's is let down not just by the resolution restriction, but by the mini-keyboard/mouse combo. Like most mini-keyboards, this one has cursor keys that are oddly positioned, and it doesn't have the extended number pad or function keys used in many games. The keyboard's built-in joystick-style mouse presents a few problems of its own; it requires both hands (one to hold down the left side of the keyboard while the other moves the mouse), making it virtually useless in games that require both keyboard and mouse input.

The lack of joystick support is another sore point for gamers, leaving little option but to use the funky keyboard and mouse for games that are better played with a gamepad or flight stick. In the end, the PC @ TV is a competent package for casual computing from the comfort of your couch, but it has several stumbling blocks to overcome before it can be considered a good solution for the rigorous demands of gaming.

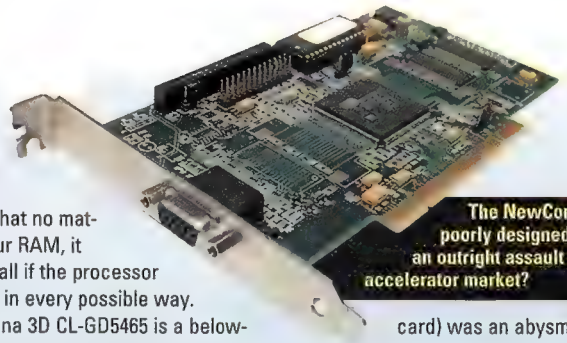
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Scan converter provides a crisp display on TV; wireless transmitter/receiver setup works well.

LOWS: TV output limited to 640x480. Wireless keyboard requires line-of-sight to the receiver, limiting its range.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're interested in web-surfing on your TV, the PC @ TV is a solid offering, but for big-screen gaming, this setup could be better.

NewCom Dash



The NewCom Dash: a poorly designed video card, or an outright assault on the 3D accelerator market?

Company: Newcom
www.newcominc.com

Phone: (818) 597-3200 (TO ORDER)
(818) 597-3208 (TECH SUPPORT)

Price: $149.95 (M.S.R.P.)

Ugh. Why would anyone introduce (read: sacrifice) a Cirrus Laguna-based video card into today's video card market?

Perhaps the lure of the lucrative video card market was too hard to resist for NewCom, an established maker of affordable, functional modems. And maybe the company dove headlong into the market without doing any research. That's just speculation, but it would explain a lot....

The Dash's box boasts of the card's 600MHz Rambus memory, which is fine — except that no matter how fast your RAM, it doesn't help at all if the processor comes up short in every possible way. The Cirrus Laguna 3D CL-GD5465 is a below-average 2D gaming accelerator and a frankly atrocious 3D accelerator. Even this card's relatively inexpensive price isn't any comfort; if you're looking for an inexpensive 2D/3D card, 4MB Rendition V2x00 cards are entering the stores in this same price range, and they're *far* superior.

An average Windows accelerator, the Dash peaks at 1600x1200 resolution and 256 colors (8-bit) at an 85Hz refresh rate. 24-bit true-color mode goes up to 1024x768. Installing the card was easy enough until we set up the Win 95 desktop at 1024x768 and 16-bit color; the "optimal" refresh rate the Dash's driver automatically chose was a flickery, headache-inducing 60Hz, and we had to bump it up manually.

Testing Direct3D acceleration (don't even *think* about OpenGL on this card) was an abysmal experience.

Visual quality was the worst we've seen since the Trident 3DImage 975. Graphics were grainy and warped in everything we ran, from the bootMarks tests to *Jedi Knight*, *Moto Racer*, and *G-Police*.

The Dash is barely able to compete with long-forgotten cards based on the S3 ViRGE or NVIDIA's NV1 chips; at best, its time is three years past. Other than as a threat ("Cut that out or I'll install a NewCom Dash card in your PC!") there's no place in today's gaming market for this unfortunate waste of circuitry.

bootMarks

DIRECT3D TESTS:
X bootMark: 11.016fps
***Forsaken* bootMark: 18.11ps**
***Terramarks*: 460 (failed level 3)**

2D GAMING TESTS:
***Quake* bootMark:**
13.9fps (640x480); 9.3fps (800x600)
***Duke Nukem 3D* bootMark:**
35fps (640x480); 22fps (800x600)

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Do we *really* have to include a "highs" heading in this review?

LOWS: Slow 2D gaming; awful 3D; visual quality is as bad as it gets.

BOTTOM LINE: You can get a much better 2D/3D card for the money. Don't even accept one as a gift.

VideoLogic SonicStorm

The deceptively small SonicStorm packs a huge amount of audio processing power.

Company: VideoLogic
www.videologic.com

Phone: (800) 578-5644 (TO ORDER)
(650) 875-0606 (TECH SUPPORT)

Price: $99 (M.S.R.P.)

Sound cards that work with the Pentium's PCI bus offer a number of significant advantages over those that plug into old-fashioned 16-bit ISA slots. With the speed and high bandwidth of a PCI bus, a sound card is able to process and send more concurrent sounds with less demand on the processor, leaving it free to crunch other game data.

VideoLogic, known for its PowerVR 3D accelerators, has entered the PCI sound market with impressive authority. The SonicStorm is a powerful, full-featured sound card offering everything a cutting-edge gamer could want at an excellent price.

Everything here is well designed, starting with the installation procedure — a friendly, HTML-based driver/demo disk walks you through the setup, and in minutes you're ready to fire up a few games. The SonicStorm's audio processor, an ESS Maestro-1, is a workhorse. This acrobatic chip combines a digital audio processor, 64 voices of wavetable MIDI, and 3D positional audio.

The digital audio is clear and accurate, definitely equal to anything within a few hundred dollars of the price. Compatible with DirectSound, the card handled most of the Win 95 games we threw at it with gusto. We ran into a few minor problems with a couple of games, including *Worms 2* and *Quake II*; both yielded slow, stuttering sound (the latter turned out to be caused by a bug in the initial release of the game).

For DOS compatibility, the SonicStorm is Sound Blaster-compatible and comes with legacy drivers for DOS games running under Win 95 and real-mode drivers for pure DOS-mode gaming.

The MIDI music is a bit disappointing; there are plenty of ISA cards on the market with better quality wavetable sound. On the other hand, from a gamer's point of view, synthesized music is becoming a bit of a dinosaur; nearly every game released in the past year or so has used digital music or CD-format Redbook audio.

The SonicStorm is also a DirectSound3D and QSound Q3D accelerator. This means games that use those standards for 3D positional audio will run faster with those positional sound schemes enabled. As we went to press, plans were in the works to support the most widely used positional audio standard, Aureal's A3D, through the use of new drivers set to be released in February.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: An excellent set of features wrapped up in a PCI sound solution; you can't beat that affordable price.

LOWS: Average quality wavetable; a few incompatibilities.

BOTTOM LINE: This card is everything a gamer needs for an excellent audio experience at a very attractive price.

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An epic adventure of good and evil.
Product Information Number 128

IAN LIVINGSTONE'S

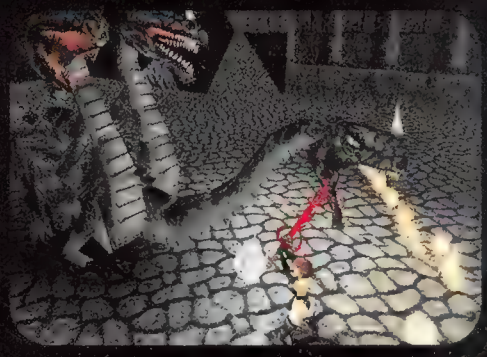
DEATHTRAP Dungeon

Before the days of stain-free carpets, earplugs and the novelty known as mercy, things were generally quite crimson. What with the slow of wit and the weak of limb spilling their guts on a daily basis, surely you can imagine

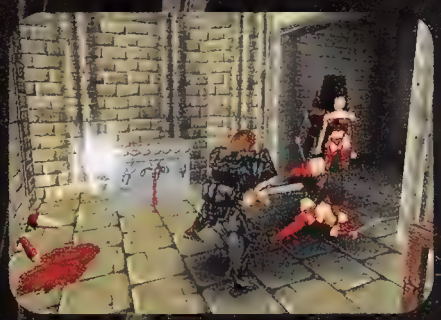
EIDOS HINT LINE 1-900-773-4367. Cost of call $0.95/minute. Must be 18 years or have parent's permission. Touch-tone required.

Splatter your way through 10 torturous levels of mazes, corridors, dungeons, and traps.

Send enemies off in a Dragon's bile blaze of gory 3-D detail.



Vex or ventilate 55 contrary denizens including Orcs, Dragons, Mummies and Zombies.



Play online with up to 4 mutually demented peers (pc version only).

Master 13 horrific implements, including swords, hammers, muskets, magic spells and your bloody bare hands.

the grim fun you've missed. Now it's time for your bath. So plunge on in or look away, but make up your mind. While you still have a choice.

www.deathtrapdungeon.com

PC CD

PlayStation

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

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Product Information Number 132

Three Logitech Mice

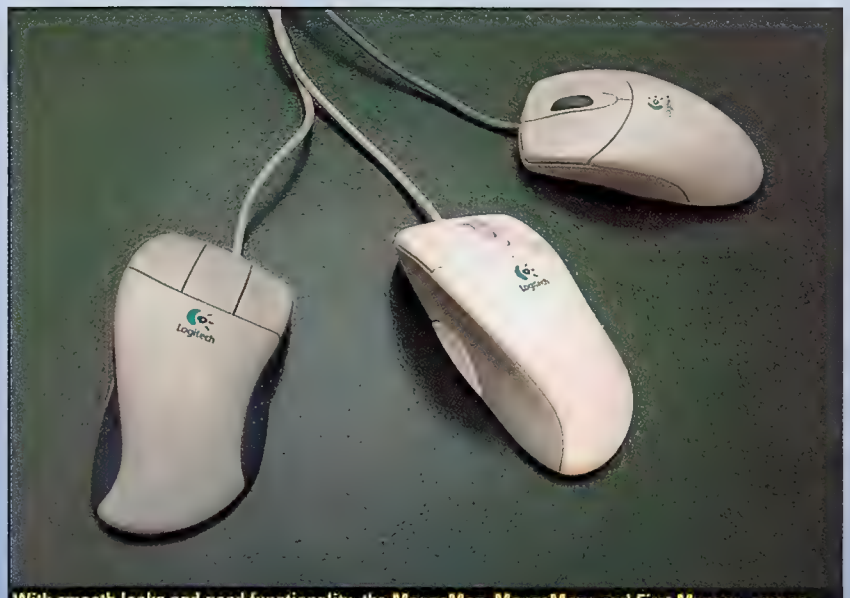
PC GAMER EDITORS CHOICE

Company: Logitech
www.logitech.com

Phone: (590) 795-8500 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $29.95 (FIRST MOUSE+)
$59.95 (MOUSEMAN)
$59.95 (MOUSEMAN+)
(ALL ESTIMATED STREET PRICES)

Logitech has done it again with three new mice that are strong representatives of the brand.



With smooth looks and good functionality, the MouseMan, MouseMan+ and First Mouse+, respectively, are strong additions to Logitech's stellar line of mice.

Logitech's line of mice includes three new models that confirm the company's reputation as the top maker of pointing devices and other controllers. The First Mouse+, MouseMan, and MouseMan+ represent a nice range of features and prices, and each has the kind of sturdy construction and attention to detail we've come to expect from Logitech.

MOUSEMAN

In addition to the usual three buttons on top, the new MouseMan introduces a fourth button on its left side, within easy reach of your thumb. You can assign a variety of tasks to any of the buttons, from scroll functions to mini-menus of commonly used commands. The software used to drive the new functions is simple and easy to use, replacing your default mouse setup under the Control Panel. The DOS support is, as usual, excellent, and we encountered no problems with any DOS games while using it. The only real drawback to the redesigned MouseMan involves using the middle button for games. If you have the middle button assigned to a special function (like double-click) you'll have to reset it to act as a generic "Middle Button" before it will work with most games.

The MouseMan has stood up to intense games of *Quake II*, the most monotonous database files, and hours of web-surfing. It's one of the sturdiest mice available, and one of the most comfortable. If you're looking for something that will last for years — and you don't want to fork out the extra money for a scrolling wheel — this is definitely the one to get.

MOUSEMAN+

With the newly redesigned MouseMan earning lustful glances from the entire *PC Gamer* staff, we knew it would take a one hell of a controller to top it — but Logitech's MouseMan+ does this with ease. This impressive mouse borrows the sleek shape and smooth operation of the new, improved MouseMan and heaps on an extra layer of features and functionality. The MouseMan+ is Logitech's answer to Microsoft's IntelliMouse, adding a clickable scrolling wheel (which is dandy for scrolling through pages in word processors or on web sites) to the MouseMan's seductive chassis. The result is one of the most comfortable and well-designed mice we've ever used, with a sleek, ergonomic shape and perfectly positioned buttons that seems to fit nearly every hand (if you're right-handed, anyway) with outstanding comfort. Plus, it's darn useful. As with the MouseMan, the four buttons of the MouseMan+ can be programmed to perform nearly any Windows 95 function, but this programmability gets an extra kick in the pants from the addition of the scrolling wheel.

Not only can you scroll through text documents or web pages, you can set zoom points that let you jump back to a tagged area with just a click of the button. In games that support it, the scrolling wheel can even give you that extra edge, letting you cycle through inventory items or switch to a particularly deadly weapon with just the flick of a finger.

FIRST MOUSE+

The First Mouse+ is one step up from the bottom of Logitech's line, adding a scrolling wheel to the elegantly simple, two-button First Mouse design. It lacks the organic, form-fitting shape of the MouseMan models, but it's still very comfortable to use for long sessions at the PC — and its symmetrical shape means it works as well for left-handers as for right-handers. The scrolling wheel is the same one used on the MouseMan+; it makes reading text files and web sites a pleasure, and it's also clickable, so it serves as a third mouse button. Like its more expensive siblings, it's fully programmable through version 7.5 of Logitech's MouseWare. And with its combination of simplicity and handy features, it may well be the best buy in the mouse market — one *PC Gamer* editor actually shelled out his own cash to buy another First Mouse+ so he'd have one at home and in the office.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Extremely comfortable, thanks to sleek shapes. Extra buttons and customizable features are great additions. First Mouse+ is a great buy.

LOWS: MouseMan and MouseMan+ are right-handed only.

BOTTOM LINE: Once again, Logitech has delivered great mice with those extra loving touches you won't find anywhere else.

Cyber Acoustics MMS-6

Company: Cyber Acoustics
www.xlink4sports.com

Phone: (360) 834-0561 (TO ORDER AND FOR TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $69 (M.S.R.P.)

Audio quality is a pretty subjective thing; you might say it's in the ear of the beholder. Unlike with graphic accelerators whose performance can be judged by benchmark tests, measures of sound quality vary from gamer to gamer and from ear to ear.

Still, there's one thing we can all agree on: with audio equipment, you get what you pay for. The Cyber Acoustics MMS-6 speakers are a low-end product. They may send your audiophile friends screaming from the room, but for the average gamer with a limited budget, they get the job done.

The MMS-6 system doesn't include a subwoofer (it's worth noting that some systems that sell for $20 to $30 more do have a subwoofer). Instead, they feature an "excursion, rolled-edge woofer" — which essentially means the desktop speakers themselves each contain half of a kind of mini-woofer. Power output is 6 watts RMS per speaker, about what you'd expect in this price range.

The controls are reasonably thorough, lacking only a left-right balance knob. From the right speaker, you can easily access the treble, bass defeat, and volume controls — no diving under the desk when the phone rings. There's even a mute button and — an increasingly rare item these days — a front-mounted earphone jack, for gamers who play late at night and don't want to disturb the kiddies.

They're not the best, but the Cyber Acoustics MMS-6 speakers will do for the gamer on a budget.

The pushbutton on/off switch itself is poorly designed, oddly enough. Its spring is too stiff for the lightweight speaker, so you've got to hold the speaker steady to turn it off without having it topple or scoot across your desk.

Of course it's how the speakers sound that really matters. They're not too bad, but they're not overflowing with clarity, either. Bass response is standard for a multimedia system without a subwoofer (a bit anemic, in other words), and midrange is a bit hollow, but the highs are crisp.

The Cyber Acoustics MMS-6 speaker system is nice for the gamer on a budget, but if you're a stickler for good sound, you'll want to spend a few more bucks.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Desktop-accessible controls, treble and bass controls included.

LOWS: No subwoofer; sparse documentation; kind of a pain to turn off and on because they are so lightweight; sound quality is average at best.

BOTTOM LINE: The Cyber Acoustics MMS-6 is worth considering for those on a budget, but hardly an audiophile's dream.

CyberStuff CyberStik

Company: CyberStuff Corp.
www.cyberstuff.com

Phone: (804) 330-7441 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $89.95 (M.S.R.P.)

The CyberStik comes really close to falling into the Useless Gimmick Zone(™), but one little feature *almost* makes this a viable controller.

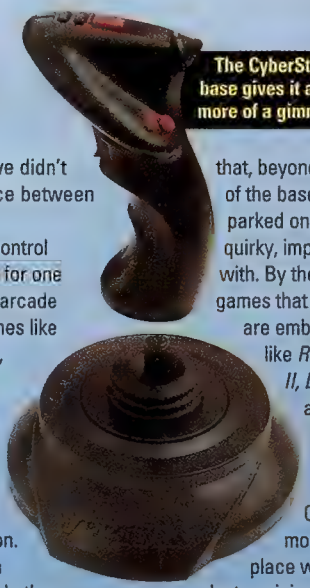
Created by CyberStuff, the CyberStik is a comfortable, ambidextrous, digital/analog joystick loaded with goodies like a hat switch, a funky, two-way push button throttle control, dual trigger buttons (one of which is hard to reach), and a surprise: you don't need a base to use it. A tilt sensor monitors its angle along standard X and Y axes, so you can hold it anywhere its generous cord can reach and still control your games.

The CyberStik works in both Win 95 and DOS mode (as a CH FlightStick Pro emulator). The sensitivity of the tilt monitor has two settings — but, honestly, with the joystick hovering above the desk, we didn't notice a major difference between the two.

The odd mode of control turned out to be just fine for one particular type of game: arcade flight games. Twitch games like *Sand Warriors, G-Police,* and other action-oriented air and space combat games are a blast to play with this floating controller, but without the stability and auto-centering of a base, true precision is out of the question. Where does that leave you in flight sims, driving games, and other more demanding titles?

That's where the CyberStik's saving grace comes in: it comes with a base. Although the spring tension is very flimsy, it adds functionality to the CyberStik's gimmickry. Unfortunately, it's possible to twist the stick on its base mount, but the CyberStik doesn't sense a twist axis; if you've spent a lot of time with joysticks that have a twist axis, like Microsoft's SideWinder sticks, that may throw you off.

The major problem with the CyberStik is that, beyond its novelty and the added value of the base, it's not a great stick. Even parked on the base, it's one of the most quirky, imprecise joysticks we've played with. By the time you've played through the games that come bundled with it — which are embarrassingly old shareware titles like *Raptor, Blake Stone, Duke Nukem II, Duke Nukem 3D, Rise of the Triad,* and *Terminal Velocity* (which the CyberStik works best with) — you'll have worn out the novelty of waving a joystick in the air. Once that's gone, you'll yearn for a more solid stick, and the CyberStik's place will be on your shelf next to your dusty, original copies of those bundled games.



The CyberStik is cool for a little while, and the base gives it a drop of added value, but it's still more of a gimmick than a dependable controller.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Comfortable for lefties as well as righties; loaded with goodies; controlling with the stick in midair is fun...

LOWS: ...but only for a brief time. The base is very flimsy; the stick is quirky and imprecise; and the bundled games are out-of-date.

BOTTOM LINE: Once the novelty wears off, this is a disappointing joystick.

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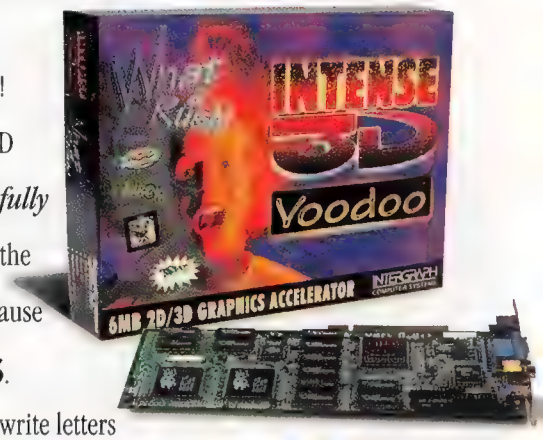

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The Hard Stuff Sideways Page

WE REVIEW SO MUCH HARD STUFF EVERY MONTH, it can be hard to keep track of what's hot and what's not. On this page, we dare to compare hardware we've reviewed in past issues. In fact, there's so much data, we had to turn the page sideways to make it all fit! This month: joysticks!

JOYSTICK	DATE REVIEWED	PRICE AS REVIEWED*	NUMBER OF BUTTONS	PROGRAMMING	AMBIDEXTROUS?	WORKS IN DOS MODE?	FUNCTION	COMMON FEATURES	COMMENTS
InterAct Magnum 6	September 97	$44.95	6	—	Yes	Yes	General purpose	HS, TH	Too stiff. Light base. Unstable. Extra buttons are useless.
Gravis Blackhawk	September 97	$34.95	4	—	No	Yes	Action games	—	Quite comfy. Good tension. Very small handle. Fourth button on base, not stick.
Saitek X36	October 97	$149.99 (includes throttle)	Tons	Software	No	Yes	Flight sims	HS, TH	Stick and throttle make an awesome combo. *Tons* of features. Highly recommended.
Logitech CyberMan II	October 97	$99	8	Software	No	Yes	3D shooters	—	Not really a joystick, but a 6-axis 3D controller. Twitchy. Hard to master.
Suncom FX1000	November 97	$14.99	2	—	Yes	Yes	Action games	—	Comfortable. Typical woes of a bargain stick: flimsy and imprecise.
Laral Group Nintendo 3D1	November 97	$69.99	8 (4 used at one time)	—	No	Yes	Action games	HS, TH, TA	Uncomfortable; bad tension; unstable base; generally bad.
Gemini Maverick	November 97	$44.99	4	—	No	Yes	General purpose	HS, TH	Comfortable. Wide range of motion. Smooth movement.
Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro	November 97	$149.99	8 (shift button doubles functionality)	Software	No	No	General purpose	FF, HS, TH, TA	Excellent grip. Good programming interface. Nice force feedback implementation. No DOS support.
Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro	January 98	$74.95	8 (shift button doubles functionality)	Software	No	No	General purpose	HS, TH, TA	Everything the Force Feedback Pro is without the force feedback.
CH Gamestick	January 98	$29.95 (est. street)	4	—	Yes	Yes	Action games	HS, TH	Awkward overall; unstable base; poorly placed throttle.
Thrustmaster Millennium Inceptor 3D	January 98	$89.98	6	Software	No	No	Sims	TH, HS, TA	Springs too heavy; uncomfortable; goofy control.
Quickshot 3D Striker	February 98	$59.99	Tons	Through game	No	Yes	Action games	HS	Keyboard emulator. No proportional control. Unforgiving.

JOYSTICK KEY

Programmability indicates how a stick is programmed: through a software interface; a method built into the stick; or both. *Common Features,* which many sticks offer, include force feedback (FF), throttle (TH), hat switch (HS), and a rudder, or twist axis (TA). *Price is MSRP except where noted.

Tech Q&A

Do you *really* need a 3D card? What can you do about line noise? We tackle these burning issues — and more!

The *Jedi Knight* shot on the left is accelerated with a Diamond Stealth II card using a Rendition V2100 chip, which lets it run smoothly at 800x600 resolution. On the right, the same game without a 3D accelerator, running at 320x200 resolution. (We could bump up the resolution of the non-accelerated version, but it'd mean a much slower, choppier game.) Is 3D acceleration really worth an extra $100 or $200? You make the call.

Q I was wondering if a 3Dfx card is really worth it, since people are telling me it's a waste of money. Is it more valuable to have a fast processor (200MHz MMX), or a 3Dfx card? Also, is it worth it to get those non-3Dfx-based cards? Finally, which is the best 3D card, and which is the best value?

—Cap'n Crunch, via the Internet

A A good gaming computer will have both a fast processor *and* a strong 3D accelerator. The 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics/Voodoo Rush chipsets lead the 3D accelerator market in the sheer number of games that support them, and the quality and speed of these (relatively) old products is only now being matched by competitors. If you plan to get a 3D card, consider one that uses a 3Dfx chip.

People who don't feel that 3D accelerators are worth the money either have never seen the difference between a hardware-accelerated game and the same game without acceleration, or they're not seriously interested in gaming goodness. Either way, Cap'n, they're not your friends. They're evil. A "family" PC that's just used for homework, web-surfing and checkbook balancing can get away without a 3D accelerator, but you're not reading *PC Gamer* to find out what you need to run Microsoft Works, right? A gaming rig without a 3D accelerator is like a Ferrari with a 2-liter engine.

Listen, everybody has a hobby, and most of them are expensive. Some people choose to spend hundreds of dollars on china dolls; some blow thousands buying and restoring cars; others build the king-daddy home theater system with a mammoth-screen TV and googlephonic sound. And some of us like to pour our spare cash into our PCs for the express purpose of gaming — a hobby that's just as valid as any other.

Need Help?

If you have a hardware question or comment, write to us at:
The Hard Stuff, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005

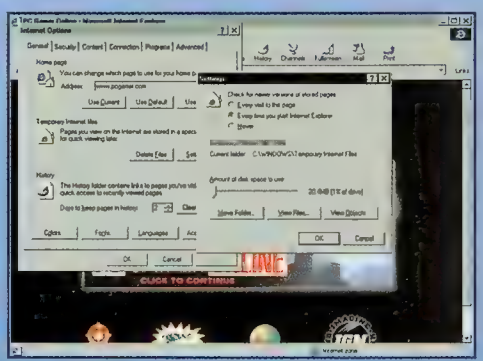
or send E-mail to:
jdurham@pcgamer.com

Q Hi. I've downloaded so many game demos, then deleted them, that my temporary folders are completely filled up with the garbage that the install programs put in 'em. Also, my Temporary Internet Files folder has pure junk from sites that I don't even go to anymore! In total, I have about 100MB in just my temp folders, and it's growing! I was wondering if I could just clear the folders (meaning delete everything in them, but not the folders themselves) without harming anything. I know because of hard-drive caching, this would slow my computer down some, but I need the space! Please tell me if I can delete these files without deleting ones that the system needs.

—Lars Harrison, Appleton, WI

A For heaven's sake, Lars, you need to get rid of that stuff!

To quell your fear: hard-drive caching is different from temp folder usage; deleting useless files (and then tuning up your hard drive with Win 95's Disk Defragmenter) will actually increase performance. Once a program has been installed, any temporary files that it didn't get rid of itself can safely be deleted. If you downloaded a program, decompressed it into a



Both Netscape Navigator and MSIE (shown) offer simple ways to limit the size of your Internet cache.

temporary folder, then installed it, the contents of the temporary folder can usually be deleted without worry.

Here's an exception: simple programs that don't use an installation routine, or older DOS or Windows 3.1 programs, often don't create temporary, pre-installation files. If you decompressed a download into a file folder and the program is run straight from there, never having run a setup program, then there's no temporary stuff to wipe out.

You can clean up those files in your temporary Internet cache, too. Both *Netscape Navigator* and *Microsoft Internet Explorer* provide easy methods of deleting cached files within their pull-down menus. They also offer ways to control the size of the hard-drive cache. Unless you frequent web sites with vast amounts of high-res photos or sound files, there's no reason to have it set for more than 5 or 10MB.

Q **Can you give me some tips for reducing line noise? My modem rarely connects at its maximum 28.8bps bandwidth.**

—Karl Cramer Jr., via the Internet

A It's much easier to forgive a mildly noisy line when all you use it for is voice communication, but when you hook up a modem and see your bandwidth suffer, it gets personal. Fortunately, you don't have to sit there and take it. There are a number of things you can do to clean up your phone lines for speedier web surfing.

To start with, make sure the problem is in your phone line and not the modem or the Internet configuration. Plug a telephone into the jack that your modem is using and make a local call; if the noise is bad enough to affect bandwidth, you should be able to hear something odd. It may be occasional or constant crackling, or a buzz or hum; sometimes there won't be any noise, but the voice on the other end will sound really quiet or far away. Make sure the person you call doesn't hear anything out of the ordinary either. If it sounds okay, the problem may be with your modem or your dial-up settings. Before you call tech support, though, try a different phone cable (or a shorter one); the problem could easily be that simple.

If you did hear noise or if the modem and connection settings check out, try the modem on a different phone jack. A loose connection or frayed wire within a jack or a wall, or a wire than runs too close to an AC line, can cause trouble.

If the problem is consistent throughout your house or apartment, contact your local phone company. Its technicians will be able to determine whose problem the noise is: theirs or yours. In most regions, the telephone company owns — and is responsible for the quality of — the wires outside individual residents' properties; some companies are responsible for the line all the way to the box on your house or apartment building. Wherever the phone company's ownership ends, the property owner's begins, and he/she is responsible for the rest of the line right up to the telephone jacks.

When you call the phone company, be aware that you may be required to make an "appointment;" in some cases, this can mean a technician will arrive at your home sometime between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and you'll have to be available that entire time; you may have to call in sick to the office.

If the source of the noise turns out to be on the phone company's side, it should be fixed free of charge. If it's on your property, however, you'll have to pay for it. The phone company should be able to have a technician troubleshoot it at your expense, or it may recommend a contractor to do the work. If you live in a rented home, you should contact your landlord to make arrangements for the repair.

Glossary

Every month, the Glossary will define terms that appear in The Hard Stuff and may be new or confusing to some readers.

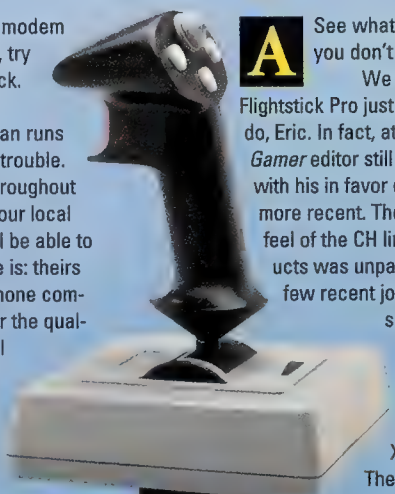
Clock speed
The speed, in MHz, at which a chip carries out instructions. Since each instruction takes one or more clock cycle — in most cases — for a chip to complete, the clock speed of a chip greatly affects its overall performance.

MHz
MEGAHERTZ, OR MILLION HERTZ (HZ)
Hertz is a measure of how frequently an electronic device or circuit goes through its cycle. 1Hz represents one cycle in one second, so 1MHz is one million cycles per second. The measure of MHz in a device is referred to as its frequency.

Rambus
Rambus is actually a company which produces extremely high-speed memory technology. Cirrus Logic uses Rambus memory in its Laguna 3D products. Rambus' home page is at *www.rambus.com*.

Q **I've been looking for a joystick to replace my aging CH Products Flightstick Pro. I play games both in Windows 95 and DOS. I would like some programmability this time around, but I want to avoid spending lots of money when I buy a new stick. I tried the Thrustmaster Millennium 3D and returned it for the same reasons you panned it in the January issue. I've looked at many stores and haven't found a stick that feels and works as well as the Flightstick Pro but is programmable. What would you recommend?**

—Eric N. Fulmer, via the Internet



Like an old pair of jeans, the classic Flightstick Pro is hard to replace.

A See what happens when you don't listen to us? We love the old CH Flightstick Pro just as much as you do, Eric. In fact, at least one *PC Gamer* editor still refuses to part with his in favor of something more recent. The unique, solid feel of the CH line's early products was unparalleled, and few recent joysticks offer the same quality.

But we can wholeheartedly recommend the X36 from Saitek. The best programmable joystick to pass through this office in a long time, the X36 feels great, looks cool, has tons of buttons and a slick, friendly programming interface. And for all that, it's surprisingly affordable. It's also available with a very good programmable throttle. Check out *www.saitek.com* for more info.

Other sticks we love which would fulfill your needs: the Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro (and the Force Feedback Pro, if you're interested in a good, if early, implementation of this developing technology), and the odd but satisfying ACT Labs EagleMax.

PCG

The Game Machine

The Game Machine represents what we consider a good, solid, affordable gaming PC that will handle every game currently on the shelves. The Game Machine has a maximum theoretical price of $2,500. This month, we're going to jump on the 3D sound bandwagon and add a good, PCI-based positional sound card. This can be a stand alone (such as VideoLogic's SonicStorm) or an add-in that works with your sound card (like a Diamond Monster Sound M80 or MMX200).

- Intel Pentium 200 MMX
- 32MB EDO RAM
- 128-bit 2D or 2D/3D graphics card OR
- Rendition V2000 family 2D/3D card
- 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics based 3D accelerator
- 4GB IDE hard drive
- 16x CD-ROM drive
- SoundBlaster AWE32 and/or 3D positional sound card
- 15" SVGA monitor
- Programmable joystick
- Multi-player gamepad (Gravis Gamepad Pro or Microsoft SideWinder)
- 56K modem

Where the hell...

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THE CRITICS AGREE!

"MicroProse's game offers weeks to months of gameplay."
Computer Gaming World, June '97

★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is just what the Samite Healer ordered."
Computer Games Strategy Plus, June '97

★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is a near-perfect translation of the card game."
PC Magazine, June '97

★★★★

"...hard-core gamers will appreciate the flexibility offered in the computer version."
Newsweek, April '97

...did you get those cards?

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"It was full of fire and smoke and light and...it drove between us and the Efrafans like a thousand thunderstorms with lightning."
–Richard Adams, Watership Down

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Spring has Sprung

Now that winter is behind us, the industry awakens this spring to survey the wreckage from a season that saw an unprecedented amount of products of unprecedented mediocrity. As Willie Nelson sings, "At 2 a.m. I went to bed with a 10 / But at 10 I woke up with a 2." I'm sure none of the game publishers thought they were in the sack with a pooch, but in the sober light of retail returns, more than a few heads will roll.

So, did you buy a bunch of fiber-filled games this winter that you can't return? Maybe you've played straight through *Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny*. Maybe you're using copies of *Creatures* to prop up an uneven table leg (guilty). Well, brush the dust off those useless discs, and let's inject them with some new life. Or, in some cases, with the first traces of life.

Speaking of life, *Creatures* is a "game" that allegedly lets you breed and raise little critters on your computer (as if Tamagotchi wasn't annoying enough). It's about as engaging as cleaning the lint out of your drier. For my part, I spent a good hour beating the hell of my Norn to see just how warped I could make it (not very, it turns out). Friend and fellow game writer Steve Poole did the same, which tells you most of what you need to know about grown men who play games for a living.

CyberLife has gathered some tools to enhance whatever meager entertainment value this dubious venture offers and published them as *Creatures Life Kit #1*, a title which raises the ominous specter of a *Life Kit #2*. I will be 100 percent frank with you and say that I have no intention of loading this sucker, since I can't imagine being able to objectively review it for its target audience (deconstructionists? The Unabomber?). But here's what you can expect:

Two new features are added: an observation kit that tracks all the Norns in your world and an object injector kit that lets you add new stuff (such as toys or animals) to the world. A set of 16 "Creatures Object Files" (some new, some from the 'net) adds new food and life forms to the world, ranging from "variant carrots" to "Shee Seed Launchers" (I don't want to know). Some new objects (cages, crystal balls, potions), two new Norns ("Forest" and "Ron"), wallpaper, and a preview of *Life Kit #2* round out the offering. Gets me hot; how 'bout you?

Leonard and Bubba, a couple of prime examples of the mysteries of genetics, also return this month in *Redneck Rampage: Suckin' Grits on Route 66*, a set of 12 new levels designed by Sunstorm. This tour through some freaky backwater locations begins with adequate levels set at a gator farm and a truck stop, then continues through the slaughterhouse, flea market, brewery, dinosaur cave, and pet coffin factory. Level design runs hot and cold, with some decent new art, but a sense of pacing and variety is lacking. I found no new weapons, and the few new monsters I saw (such as the gators) looked pretty poor.

In *Redneck Rampage: Suckin' Grits on Route 66*, the new gators don't look so swell...but the cows are still tops.

Worse, the game is badly showing its age — and no add-on pack should've been issued for this game until the 3D accelerator patch was ready. It's okay, but a far cry from some of the better work we've seen for *Quake*.

And speaking of 3D acceleration....

Okay, dig this: You have a major title in development for two or three years. You spend a lot of money. You hype it out of all proportion to its worth or merit. Early in the course of this development cycle, a new technology becomes available that a myopic baboon could predict will become a driving force in gaming. You have a two-year heads up on this technology. What do you do?

A) Plan ahead and code your games to take advantage of the cutting edge, thereby ensuring market dominance.

B) Ignore the cutting edge and let your game get slaughtered in the marketplace.

C) Let your game get slaughtered in the marketplace, *then* catch the tech wave after every reviewer and gamer has pounded the hell out of your outdated title and moved on to *Quake II*.

If you answered "A," you're obviously not a Very Important Game Publisher Type Person and should go back to the mailroom.

Predicting the tech curve isn't all that tough. The makers of *7th Guest* and *Myst* saw that two years down the road everyone would have CD-ROM drives, so they were ready with games that really took advantage of the technology once it became ubiquitous (this is why they spent years at the top of the sales charts). Few companies were as prescient about 3D acceleration, though, leaving us with the bane of 1998: the 3D patch

T. Liam McDonald

Now that winter has come and gone, Tom has a touch of spring fever — which explains why he is ranting about games and add-on discs he hasn't played yet.

download (or, worse, the "enhanced" retail version).

You know the drill: You buy a new game. The graphics don't measure up to *Quake II*/*EF 2000 2.0*/*Wing Commander Prophecy*. The frame rates are lower than worm poop. You wait. You check the Internet. You wait some more. Glaciers move. Nations fall. Finally, the publisher releases a 3D upgrade ... for a 3D accelerator card you don't own. Angels weep. You wait even longer. Finally, the patch is ready, and you plug in for a 30-500-minute download of a feature that should've been in the damn game to begin with. By then, you no longer care. You simply want to find a Very Important Game Publisher Type Person and defenestrate him.

What is that old saw about the missing horse, the barn door, and the closing thereof?

While the DOS 3Dfx version of *Lands of Lore* runs smoothly, the Direct3D version has this lovely effect.

Anyway, badly needed 3D patches are still coming in, the latest being for *Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny*, about which some silly people complained because the jaggies were sharp enough to impale their characters. Well, there's bad news and good news and bad news: It's still a crappy two-year-old 2D engine, but it does move faster in DOS. In Windows 95, however, every object comes with a huge black square that wasn't properly integrated with the engine. This has the wonderful side effect of lowering the framerate to about 1/4th of a frame per second.

Next month, we'll revisit 3D Patch Theater with a look at *iF-16*, as well as reviews of some actual add-on discs. Bet you can't wait.

PCG

BUG PATCHES*

CART Precision Racing (Microsoft): Improved AI. Increased frame rate. Game controller null-zone. Pit lane auto-pilot. Gamma control for object brightness. Rain tires cheat fixed. Friction levels on grass and sand. More precise control over graphic settings. Steering ratio maximum increased in garage. Default setups improved for beginners. Wing-type error fixed for short ovals. Sound on replays fixed. Assorted bugs fixed. AI cars more competitive at intermediate and professional level. New FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). *CART101.EXE*

***Chasm: The Rift* Modem Patch** (GT Interactive): Patch that adds full modem support. *MDM1998.ZIP*

CIVIL WAR GENERALS II

***Civil War Generals II* v. 1.2** (Sierra): This patch installs the latest files needed for connecting to WON.net (formerly SIGS). It also fixes all known connection, stability, and divergence issues in IPX network, direct modem-to-modem and WON.net Internet play. Contains many other gameplay tweaks — read the README.TXT file for more details. *CWG29512.ZIP (WIN95) CWG23112.ZIP (WIN3.1)*

***Descent to Undermountain* v. 1.1** (Interplay): Support for Sound Blaster Pro has been added. Crash when selecting No Sound during the sound setup has been fixed. Monster AI has been improved. Graphic errors with Khelben have been fixed. Lockpicks for thieves now work properly. Crash bug during level loads was fixed. Dagger and Short Sword are now more effective. More text messages were added for spells. Cloak of protection +3 now works properly. Several spells now have added functionality. Numerous other small fixes were introduced. *DTU1_1.ZIP*

***Excalibur 2555AD* Voodoo Rush Support** (Sir-tech): Adds Voodoo Rush support. *EX_RUSH.ZIP*

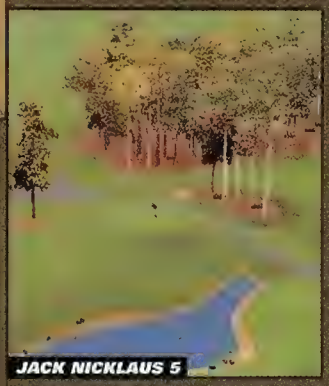
***FIFA 98* v. 1.1** (EA Sports): This will update the AI and allow users to utilize D3D-capable cards. AI improvements include improved onside logic, improved breakaway logic, formation improvements, CPU shooting logic improvements. *FIFAV110.ZIP*

***Flight Unlimited II* v. 1.02** (Eidos): 1024x768 resolution is now available as a non-cockpit mode. You can scale the size of the runway signs and taxiway signs. There are now more lighted objects present: Cargo ships, sailboats, cruise ship, oil tanker, and the Oakland port horses. There are new fixes for cloud haze and sun glare. New overcast, non-raining night, beneath the deck color; it used to just be black (not interesting), now it's a slightly lighter color, and looks better. There should now be much less polygon cracking in the terrain in the software renderer in default perspective mode. Many other changes. *FLT01_02.ZIP*

***iF-16* v. 1.3** (Interactive Magic): Post-mission crashing eliminated. Cloud 'bleeding' fixed. Joystick calibrator fault fixed. CH Products' Win95 coolie-hat bug eliminated. Laser designation system overhaul. Messaging System active in Two-Player games. New 'localization' system. *IF16W95.EXE*

***F1 Racing Simulation* 3D Patch** (Ubi Soft): Adds 3D support for Direct3D and Voodoo 3Dfx chipsets. *F1RS105.ZIP (Direct3D) F1RS105V.ZIP (Voodoo)*

***Jack Nicklaus Golf 5* v. 5.1** (Accolade): 'Net games will no longer be able to get out of sync because of blocked messages (e.g. taking a drop with a menu item displayed). Bingo Bango Bongo max score will be changed from 99 to 25. When specific required files are missing, the game will now ask for missing files. Save attempts of more than 50 characters will now save gracefully. If two players are necessary for a game and the game is changed to a one player game, Tee-off button will be turned on. All golfer reactions will play in replays. The MouseMeter cursor will always disappear when appropriate. No more occasional commentary overlaps. The scroll down button on an empty leader board will no longer crash the game. Lie graphic for ball-in-cup has been improved. Commas have been inserted for the dollar earnings. Removing all handicap and/or scratch players from the Names.txt list will not cause the game to crash. You will be allowed a free drop when your ball is on the cart path. The commentary will come out of both speakers all the time. All hot keys already in the game will be listed next to their menu function. "E" will replace "+0" in tournaments on the leader board and info bar. AI golfer will rotate to point to target for animation according to shot taken. The user will be able to customize the grid color via a command line instruction. The ball tracking on course overheads will be white instead of black. Country Club Tournament descriptions will be changed to one round, instead of four rounds. The names that show up in a tournament will be more random. Record Golfer function will work in Best Score Competitions and Country Club Tournaments. Best Score Competitions will record statistics for the course and golfers. Many other changes. *JACK51UP.ZIP*



JACK NICKLAUS 5

***Lands of Lore II* v. 1.30** (Westwood): Adds 3D support. *LL2_130E.ZIP*

***Lords of Magic* v. 1.2** (Sierra): This patch fixes several single-player bugs and adds some enhancements. For more information on what the patch fixes please read the READMEV102.TXT file. *LOM12.ZIP*

Madden NFL Football 98 (EA Sports): Adds 3D support for most 3D accelerators. Added some new animations. Many other changes — read the README.TXT file. *MAD98_12.ZIP*

***MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* v. 1.1** (Activision): Allows players to use Direct3D enhancements. Also includes many gameplay changes, such as changes to Salvage, continuing missions, and many bug fixes. *MERC1_1.ZIP*

*YOU'LL FIND ALL OF THESE PATCHES ON *THE CD!*

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Stars and Planets

If you're playing turn-based strategy games on the Internet, playing by E-mail is the way to go. Who wants to sit around waiting for eight other players to finish their turns? Submitting turns by E-mail lets you take as much time as you need to plan your turn offline. And instead of trying to pack all your planning and strategy into one marathon, six-hour session, playing by E-mail lets you do a little bit every day, and the game itself can last for weeks, if not months. (A web-based server model, such as VR-1's *UltraCorps*, with similar daily or weekly turn deadlines, also makes sense, for the same reasons.)

What works in a solo strategy game doesn't often work in multi-player. Failed examples include *CivNet* or the multi-player version of *SimCity* (does anyone remember that one? We fired up an IPX game of a networked *SimCity* here at *PC Gamer* well over a year ago and promptly began putting up buildings right next to each other. The only question was — why?).

Tim Wisseman may not exactly be a household name, but I'd be a bit remiss in discussing E-mail strategy games without a nod toward his excellent *VGA Planets* series.

Big before the Internet itself was big, created on a shoestring budget by one programmer in rural California, *VGA Planets* is one of those rare success stories for the little guy: the shareware author. Like Jay Cotton with Kali or Joe Powell and his Gamespy team, someone with the right product can fill the right niche more nimbly than commercial publishers.

VGA Planets is a multi-player space strategy game played through E-mail, with some 50,000 registered users over the years. Probably its strongest feature is the real variety between the races. Eleven different races are featured in the original, all of which are inspired by the classics of science-fiction film. Though not specifically named as such in the game, you have the *VGA Planets* equivalents of Star Wars' Rebel Alliance and evil Galactic Empire; Star Trek's Federation, Klingons, Romulans, Borg, Tholians, Gorn, and Pirates of Orion; even the Cylons and those Colonial Warriors who flew around in the Battlestar Galactica.

And the races *are* different. Unlike the cookie-cutter races of commercial ventures, each race has significant, understandable special abilities, and more specifically, ships with different abilities. The Tholians (inspired by the classic Trek episode "The Tholian Web") lay dangerous minefields that capture and drain ships. The Borg can assimilate all of the inhabitants of conquered planets, and their vast cube ships are among the toughest ships in the game, along with the Empire's tremendous Super Star Destroyers. If you've ever wanted to pit cloaked Romulan warships against the flying wedges of the Imperial Navy or match the vast fighter armies of the Rebellion against the fighterless doctrine of the Federation, this is the game for you.

Trading and capturing ships of different races becomes a critical part of the game, and many a strategist has spent a long hour contemplating the best combination of races to ally and conquer the game. Resources, technology, trade routes, and black ops also play a key role in any game.

So if you like space strategy games but prefer human opponents, *VGA Planets* is certainly worth your while to try. And try it you can, at no cost. It's shareware, so you can play a few sample games (with the only penalty being a limited tech level; you're not going to win with a limited tech level, but you'll get a good feel for what the game does).

Warning — it's not for the computer illiterate. The older DOS versions (3.0 and down) require you to know your way around a command prompt, dealing with directories and file names and using the occasional command-line switch. Documentation is thorough if a bit haphazard, and hacks, modifications, and other add-on utilities are rampant among experienced players of the game. So look around for a novice game. A good starting place for newbies is AOL's forum (keyword "VGAP"), or Tim's official page at *www.wilmington.net/vgaplanets/*.

A new Windows 95 version, 4.0, is in development, with a number of improvements. And though the name may be getting a little dated (VGA as a graphics standard is slowly going the way of CGA and EGA), Wisseman doesn't want to give up his existing name recognition.

Now if *VGA Planets* sounds like *Stars!* to you, you'd be right; *Stars!* was essentially a different version of *VGA Planets* — though, unlike Wisseman, its authors were not averse to signing a deal with a game publisher.

Wisseman doesn't resent the success of *Stars!*, though. "Their ads with all the planets and stars around the cartoon man that boasted of *Stars!* lack of graphics warmed my heart," he says. "The annoying thing about *Stars!* was how it was launched on the net with a large and ugly flame war" regarding the game's provenance.

Wisseman also notes that *Stars!* has a lot of design similarities to *VGA Planets*, including three mineral resources, three planetary structures, and a similar file-exchange system.

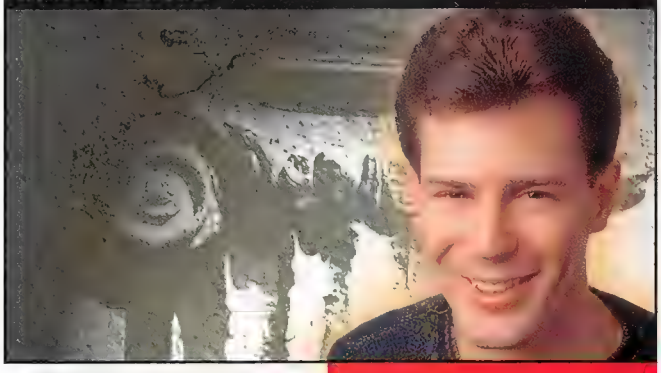
"In the gaming business anything goes now," he says. "Games and game ideas are copied, stolen, and improved on; it is now a way of life. Companies must live with it or go under. It's not very nice, but it is perfectly legal."

But Wisseman seems resigned to the fact that whenever *VGA Planets* is mentioned, *Stars!* will be too.

"*VGA Planets* has a very large footprint on the 'net, yet *Stars!* is firmly fused to *VGA Planets* almost every place you look," he says. "From now on — most likely until I go out of business — *VGA Planets* will always be compared to *Stars!* in magazines, books, and on the 'net."

PCG

Jason Bates



The best way to play turn-based strategy games on the Internet is through E-mail, and *VGA Planets* has been doing it that way for years.

Is Camping a Capital Crime?

For deathmatchers everywhere, it's the question that has triggered more debate than any other gameplay issue, and seemingly will never be resolved conclusively: Is "camping," the practice of staying put and sniping at other players from a secluded vantage point (often near the location of a prized object which acts as "bait"), ethical, or is it bad sportsmanship? The reason this question is so hard to answer is because every player has his or her own interpretation of the ethics and morals of deathmatching.

The "victims" of camping usually become so frustrated and enraged that they cannot be reasoned with. In most first-person shooters, be it a one-on-one, free-for-all, or team game, the complaint uttered most from the losing side is the all too common: "Those guys were camping!"

I would like to make my stance very clear. I believe that camping is ethical, in every way, shape, and form; however, I also believe that people who camp lack style, and thereby make the game less enjoyable for other players. From a logistical standpoint, camping is a legal and effective tactic. But stylistically speaking, it's extremely boring to watch as well as to play against. When used to control a level, a less rigid variety of camping, otherwise known as "guarding" may be tactfully used. The difference between the two is slight; the word camping is derived from the description that a person "pitches a tent and sets up camp" on the object or location they wish to stake out. Once there, they never leave the area, always staying within a few feet of their campsite. Guarding, however, is controlling a prized item by staying close enough to it to pick it up when it respawns, but also venturing out to hunt.

Now, as much as I personally dislike camping, I feel it is everyone's right to play however they wish — this is America, after all — and can even prove that camping is, strictly speaking, not unethical or unfair. Let us examine some of the usual criticisms levelled at campers:

"It's cheating." It's always been my philosophy that if you can do something without using codes or hacks or by exploiting bugs or design flaws, then it isn't cheating. A player's strategy, style, and level of aggression are his choices and his alone. If he chooses to hang around in a certain area and play conservatively, it could be considered an extremely weak playing style, but cheating it is *not*.

"It requires little to no skill to camp." Actually, camping requires quite a specific set of skills. One must be extremely patient when camping, as it may take minutes before the enemy wanders into your kill zone. Additionally, camping only describes the act of the person waiting for the other to come by — not the skill it might then require to actually execute the kill. Also, if camping were to be deemed "skill-less," shouldn't shooting and killing an enemy that conveniently reappears right in front of you after being fragged also be considered unfair? That's a design flaw everyone is happy to exploit, but it does not carry the same stigma as camping.

"Campers aren't playing for fun." This argument is based solely on personal preference; what's fun to one person may be utterly boring to the next. This is the most common complaint heard from people who are simply sore that they've been killed by a camper. It's an argument borne more out of anger than out of reason.

"I would never just sit there and be cheap like that. I always run around and hunt people down." That argument, a particularly common one, holds no validity whatsoever. It is not anyone's right to judge a particular tactic's fairness based on what they don't do themselves. When playing 3D action games, patience is a virtue. Some people just aren't patient enough to sit at one spot without moving until someone comes around.

So camping is not unethical or unfair — but it is, in my opinion, tacky and cheap, at least in free-for-all games. With many people in the game, most of whom have no weapons or armor for much of the time, it is rightly considered lame to camp out by the level's only rocket launcher. However, in team games especially, guarding and camping is part of the strategy of controlling the level. The focus of a 4-on-4 team strategy is to not allow the opposing team to get good weapons and armor, so a match won by controlling the level should not only be considered a great team performance, but also the use of good strategy and tactics.

It is often hard to determine the level of cheapness of camping in a one-on-one match. Levels are usually big enough and have items spread out evenly enough to make camping less effective. The way most *Quake* levels are planned out, if a person is camping on one side of the level, there should be enough powerful weapons and armor on the opposite side to even the playing field. Thus, it is no excuse to blame a loss because "the other player was camping" — so don't even try it.

Ethically, logically, and strategically speaking, camping is perfectly acceptable. But still, I cannot think of anything more boring to watch, boring to play, and lame to see than a camper. So the next time you come across one, don't call him a cheater, a crappy player, or any other nasty names. Instead, simply open your message window and type, "Please Refrain From Remaining Stationary In a Strategically Critical Area, With The Intent To Artificially Inflate Your Chances Of Victory To Make Up For Your General Lack of Style."

Or as I like to abbreviate it, "You wuss." PCG

You can read more from Dennis at his regularly updated web site, located at www.gamers.com.

Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"

This month, Dennis tackles one of 3D gaming's most controversial issues — should players who "camp" be considered a lower form of life?

...YARMOOR [YELLOW] DEFEATS FLATLINER [BLACK] IN A SANCTIONED MATCH ON SOLARIS...

Stone -GrpW-> -----: Where did DW's Banshee go?
JT Chance -GrpW-> -----: It shredded my gyro!
I'm out! DEAD!
Stone -GrpW-> -----: I'm gonna need help
- who's left?
HELLO?

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Nobody's Perfect

I'll be the first to admit, I'm not always right. Of course, I don't have to admit it often, because I'm usually right on the money (just humor me here). But once in a great while, the cosmic rays that affect the thought processes of humanity can scramble my senses, and I'll actually make something most mortals know as a "mistake." I prefer to think of them as "spatial disorientation-related misnomers," but it all adds up to the same thing.

Whenever I make one of these errors, however, I like to make sure things are put right, and that everyone hears both sides of the story. This particular error occurred several months ago — in the October 1997 issue. I put together a feature called "Phoenix Rising: The End of the Roleplaying Depression," in which I previewed several RPGs on their way or already on the market. In a sidebar called "Current Choices," on page 145, I wrote a paragraph about Interplay's latest RPG, *Fallout*. I stated that, "Originally using the GURPS license from Steve Jackson Games, the entire system had to be reworked from the ground up when Jackson withdrew from the deal." This is where the cosmic rays must have scrambled a few brain cells. A few months later, I received a letter from Mr. Jackson himself, stating that, in fact, he did not withdraw from the deal at all — Interplay dropped the license of its own accord.

I did my best to track down what exactly happened, seeing as how things weren't as I'd heard they were. Here's Jackson's side of the story: He didn't hear that anything was amiss until he got a call from the media asking him about "Interplay dropping the license." Curious as to what this might mean, he contacted Interplay. At first, the game company denied it, Jackson says — then later that day he found out from another Interplay representative that a statement had been released saying the GURPS license *might* be dropped. Later in the conversation, he says, his contact at Interplay admitted that the license *would* be dropped.

In numerous conversations with Interplay, Jackson says, he made a lot of concessions that dropped protections Interplay had originally agreed to. Still, Interplay officially decided to drop the license and come up with its own system.

So from Jackson's point of view, at least, I was wrong when I wrote that he withdrew from the deal; he says the decision was Interplay's.

But Interplay tells the story a bit differently. According to Interplay's RPG head, Feargus Urquhart, Jackson had some troubles with *Fallout*. He didn't like the violence in the introduction, Urquhart says; he wanted to make the game's characters bigger, with more detail on the weapons; and he didn't like the little characters that represent the different skills in the game — in fact, he wanted those Monopoly-style cartoon characters pulled out. After wrangling back and forth with the developers and going over the contract (which apparently said Jackson had control over the environment in which the license is used — pretty vague), Jackson basically said that if Interplay went ahead with *Fallout* as is, he'd take action. Rather than dealing with red tape, Interplay dropped the license.

Either way, it looks like it was ultimately Interplay's decision to drop the GURPS license. And who's at fault is a moot point — *Fallout* was released with an excellent skill system, and it's a great roleplaying game. What more could we want? And now I've explained the situation; my conscience is clear and my error absolved. And that's all that really matters in my own egocentric, self-indulgent world, anyhow.

Ultima Online Revisited

I've gotten a lot of E-mail regarding my review of Origin's *Ultima Online*, which ran in our January 1998 issue. Some of the E-mail was, shall we say, less than kind, casting aspersions on my taste in games, my ability to review games, and even my sexual orientation (those were the interesting E-mails). Other, less critical letters gently disagreed with my opinion of the online RPG and suggested that I give it another shot.

Still others applauded my keen grasp of good gameplay and approved of how I "gave Origin its due." But I heard from several rational people who told me many of the problems I had with the initial release of *UO* have been fixed, and they persuaded me to look at the game again. So I pulled out the CD, fired it up, and entered Britannia once more.

I was pleased to learn that some of what was told was true. There are several new *UO* servers now, and the main complaint against the game has been slightly relived — the lag. Origin's tamed the monster somewhat so at least the game is playable, if not silky-smooth. Many of the game-balancing issues have been resolved, as well.

But it still takes quite a while to feel like you're *doing* anything (something many feel is a plus, but I find frustrating). When you first enter *UO*, expect to spend some time building your character before you can get into the game. Money is scarce, and building up funds can take a while. Still, players seem much more cordial now, and while player-killing is still rampant, it's at least anticipated and penalized.

The game still has its faults, certainly: Lag isn't gone for good, and there are still some unsavory players who take advantage of bugs. But enough of the players are actually *roleplaying* now to give *UO* something of the thrill I expected. I have to stand by my review — Origin released a buggy version of the game and used consumers as beta-testers. But Origin has made good on its promise to update *UO* regularly, and if you can get your new character past the first few trials and tribulations, you'll have some fun.

PCG

Michael Wolf

Just whose decision was it to remove the GURPS system from Interplay's *Fallout*? Mike sorts out the story. Plus, a fresh look at *Ultima Online*.

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Product Information Number 189

Grigsby Signs with TalonSoft

What Sid Meier is to strategy games, Gary Grigsby is to wargames: a legend, a definer of the genre, a name you can take to the bank. His resume reads like a list of Wargaming's Finest Moments, ever since the crude-looking but ambitious *War in Russia* (1984), *Kampfgruppe* (1985), *Panzer Strike* (1987), *Second Front* (1990), *Carrier Strike* (1992), *Pacific War* (1992), and *Steel Panthers I - III* (1995-1997). And those are only the highlights.

During this entire 13-year period, Grigsby has been affiliated with just one game publisher: Strategic Simulations, Inc., or good ol' SSI. And SSI, in turn, has been traditionally the most prolific publisher of hardcore wargames in this hemisphere — not only of Grigsby's games, but those of Norm Koger's (*Age of Rifles*, etc.) and other master gamesmiths.

But Koger defected to TalonSoft almost a year ago, and now Grigsby (along with *Steel Panthers* co-designer Keith Brors) has done the same. That's a trio of Heavy Hitters, folks. If only one of these gentlemen had switched allegiance, it would be just another instance of the musical-chairs syndrome so prevalent in the gaming industry, but *all three* of SSI's best-known wargame designers defecting in one swell foop?! This portends a sea change in the Order of Things, and one of no small magnitude.

"It's not like I had some kind of personal falling-out with SSI," Grigsby insists. "There was no rancor or hard feelings involved in my decision. As you know, the gaming industry is becoming more concentrated; production costs are going through the roof, and SSI simply finds it impractical, from a bottom-line point of view, to publish any game that isn't going to sell approximately 75,000 to 100,000 copies. Now, we could do that with *Steel Panthers*, but the kind of hardcore wargames I've traditionally been associated with are only going to sell half that number. Since I don't want to spend the rest of my life designing sequels to *Steel Panthers*, I started looking around for a company that *would* do justice to the other kinds of games I want to do, and TalonSoft fit the bill perfectly."

William R. Trotter

For Grigsby, the new situation is ideal: he has a contract to do *Steel Panthers IV* for SSI and an open-ended agreement with TalonSoft to design those less-than-100,000-copy games for which he is famous.

Keith Brors is also an industry old-timer; although not as closely identified with the wargame genre as Grigsby, he's been programming games and designing graphics since the early 1980s (among his credits are SSI's Dark Sun games and the cult classic *Pool of Radiance*). He, too, feels optimistic about the new arrangement.

"TalonSoft is a company of and for wargamers," Brors says. "You can tell Jim Rose's heart is in it. They've built up a remarkable backlist of games for a company that's only been in business for about two years. And just the fact of having two publishers gives Gary and I a kind of liberating flexibility. I really think this is an ideal situation — for us, for the companies, and ultimately for the gamers as well."

The first TalonSoft game slated to appear under the Grigsby/Brors byline will be a day-by-day, hour-by-hour, squadron-level simulation of the Battle of Britain. Currently, Grigsby's tweaking the game for playability, entirely from the German side.

"Most accounts of this battle lead you to believe it was a very narrow escape for the British, but they actually had a significant edge going into the campaign, and they never lost it," Grigsby says. "They had radar, they had superb intelligence, they were fighting close to home and could rotate squadrons so that their best pilots got a bit of rest between crises. By contrast, the Germans' intelligence was dreadful — they had *no idea* what damage they were doing. And their pilots' effectiveness fell off quickly from cumulative fatigue.

"Most of the gameplay options are on the German side, because they're the ones who need help," Grigsby says. "The outcome of that battle may have hinged on something as simple as Goering's failure to equip his fighters with drop-tanks, so they could spend more time over their targets. It was no great technological leap, for Heaven's sake — the Luftwaffe had used drop-tanks in the Spanish Civil War!" he continues. "But for some unknown reason, nobody thought about using them over England, where they would have doubled the effectiveness of the German

Will *Steel Panthers III* be Gary Grigsby's last game for SSI? Not necessarily, but the specialized, hard-core wargames that made Grigsby a legend in gaming will most likely come from TalonSoft in the future.

After more than 12 years with SSI, legendary wargame designer Gary Grigsby has moved to TalonSoft. In this month's column, he tells The Colonel why.

"I don't want to spend the rest of my life designing sequels to *Steel Panthers*." — Gary Grigsby

Norm Koger designed *Age of Rifles* and other wargaming classics for SSI before making the move to TalonSoft. Now Grigsby and Brors will join him there, making TalonSoft a heavy hitter in the wargame genre.

fighters. In our game, you can use them."

You can also fight an entirely different campaign, starting in 1941: a massive strategic onslaught designed to smash Britain's industrial output. Although the Luftwaffe lacked a real heavyweight strategic bomber like the B-17, it had enough lighter aircraft to send wave after wave after wave on short-range missions against the English Midlands and their concentrations of mines and factories.

"The AI will hammer you without respite in this version of the campaign," promises Grigsby, "and the computer will track the effectiveness of every single bomb dropped. I hope it'll make for an exciting backs-to-the-wall battle."

If the Battle of Britain game flies, the next Grigsby/Brors TalonSoft product will be a grand strategic air combat game based on Grigsby's cult fave *USAAF* (1985). This game promises to be truly massive in scale, as it will recreate *day-to-day* the bombing offensive against the Reich, tracking the U.S. missions by day, the RAF missions by night, and every flak battery and Luftwaffe squadron that opposed them.

Further down the road, but perhaps most exciting of all: a super-detailed air/ground/naval simulation of the Guadalcanal campaign. "We'll abstract the ground fighting," Grigsby speculates, "since it mostly consisted of a lot of wretched Japanese and American infantry thrashing around in the jungle and coming down with malaria — there wasn't a whole lot of tactical maneuvering per se. The battle was decided at sea and in the air, and our game will reflect that."

TalonSoft's *East Front*, along with its Battleground series, has secured the company's reputation as a successful publisher of serious wargames.

So the split between Grigsby, Brors, and SSI isn't really a divorce: their talents are still on call for any wargame that has the magic 100,000-copy potential SSI wants. But in the meantime, their new association with TalonSoft gives these restless visionaries an outlet for the kind of detail-rich, ultra-accurate wargames they've built their reputations on.

Sounds to me like the best possible arrangement for all concerned.

The Battleground Series Lives!

Although TalonSoft's Battleground series is now officially terminated, the games published under that rubric still have a legion of fans. To cater to their interests, the series' chief programmer, John Tiller, has created a web page at *http://hiwaay.net~tiller*. The big attraction right now is a full-blown scenario editor for all the Battleground Civil War titles. Soon to follow is a similar editor for all the Napoleonic titles. If you, like me, really got off on these games, this site is the place to feed your addiction, as well as to exchange comments with other Battleground fans. Check it out.

PCG

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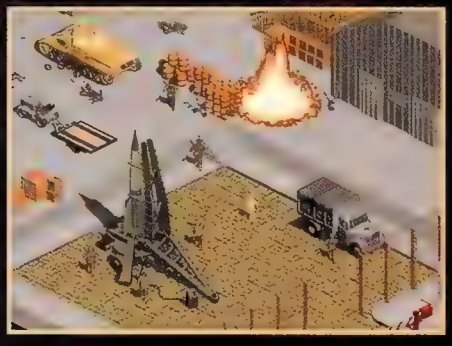

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Product Information Number 307

So You Think You're a Sim Nut

Here's how Jeffery "Rhino" Babineau describes it:

"By 1200 on Saturday we usually have a battle going on. We fly till about 0400 Sunday, then break for a few hours of sleep. Breakfast, coffee, and again by 1100 we continue the campaign. We usually stop around 1600 on Sunday."

If Babineau sounds like he's talking about a military operation, it's only a measure of how seriously he and his buddies take their air combat gaming. Babineau is CO of the Delta Hawks, a "LAN air combat squadron" based in Stockton, California.

Every so often, the members of the Delta Hawks meet at Babineau's home with their PCs in tow. They set up a local-area network and spend a long, nearly sleepless weekend flying together in multi-player sims like *EF2000*, *Su-27*, and *Longbow 2*. Sounds like fun.

Babineau says it all started with Spectrum HoloByte's original *Falcon*.

"I had a few friends who used to get together and play *Advanced Squad Leader*," Babineau says. "We were just getting into computers and were flying *Falcon*."

The sim bug bit them, but they already thought multi-player air combat would be even more rewarding. So they tried hooking up two computers using 2400 baud modems and *Falcon*'s serial-link option.

"We had a frame rate of about one minute per frame," Babineau says. "We were way ahead of our time."

But that failed experiment didn't deter Babineau and his friends. And when *Falcon 3.0* came out, with its options for modem and network play, they found they were right about multi-player action. Pretty soon, they decided to try and find a few more sim nuts and start a LAN squadron like the ones springing up across the country.

"I downloaded a database of *Falcon 3.0* modem players from CompuServe that listed players by area code," Babineau says. "I hooked up with a few other guys in Stockton, and we had our first meeting. It was only later that we discovered not even animal sacrifice would make *Falcon 3.0* reliable. To this day, I have no idea what happened to my neighbor's gerbil."

But then came SSI's *Su-27 Flanker 1.5*, DID's *EF2000* with the *TACTCOM* add-on, and Jane's *Longbow 2*. The Delta Hawks were in business. Now the group hosts as many as 17 PC pilots from all walks of life. The youngest member, Robert "Trigger" Peck, is 19; the oldest is Lou "Yoda" Mayer, a 60-something former Marine sniper who swears he's going to die before *Falcon 4.0* comes out.

"The squadron started with *Falcon 3.0*, and all sims must be compared to it," Babnineau. "*EF2000* allowed eight players to participate in a multi-player campaign with *flawless* LAN connections. *Su-27 1.5* didn't have a campaign, but it allowed us to fly a continuous mission with 24-hour ops. We got our butts kicked when we all fell asleep and the AI did terrible things to our airbases. But the *feel* of the game was terrific.

"Currently, *Longbow 2* is the sim of choice," Babineau says. "It offers multi-player LAN campaigns, and it's fun. We almost always go out with two guys in each chopper. It's just a hoot to yell at my pilot to get me into weapon parameters at the same time he's yelling at me to kill someone. I can't tell you how disappointed we were to hear that Jane's *F-15* was not going to have two-man, multi-player campaigns like *Longbow 2*."

What does it take to fly with the Delta Hawks? A PC and a network card, obviously. Most of the group's members use Pentium 166 machines. Thrustmaster joysticks and throttles are the most popular, but Saitek's new controllers are showing up in some members' rigs, and there's an odd CH Products stick as well. But the group's hardcore members don't stop there, adding custom flight chairs and even CB radios to their systems.

"What most of the guys have done is go to an auto wrecking yard and find a good seat," Babineau says. "They build a base for it and mount their sticks and throttles to the chair. If you think about it, this makes perfect sense; auto seats are designed for *long*-term usage, and that's what we do.

"The CBs are our biggest contribution to the flight sim community," he says. "They happened after our first *Falcon 3.0* get-together, in which we had three flights of two aircraft and all had very different mission criteria to meet. Yelling across the room was a real drag. So we went in search of something cheap and flexible. The CBs were perfect. The effect of the radio communications draws you much deeper into the whole flight simulation — ask anyone who's tried them. They won't go back. "

Of course, we're talking about a lot of money sunk into gaming rigs — not to mention a lot of sweat and pulled muscles when it comes time to break it all down, lug it over to the Delta Hawks' base of operations, and set it up for a fly-in. But Babineau says all the work pays off in fun and a real sense of camaraderie.

"We really enjoy the fact that when we get into trouble, we can call a fellow squadmate to help out," he says. "I ask Dan 'Crash' Crenshaw to get the bandits, he does. Yoda asks me to kill a ZSU, I do. Ken 'Grizzly' Webb hits the target, I'm happy. Joe 'Hot Sauce' Merino gets home in one piece, I'm happy. Do you think we could get that kind of thrill from an AI pilot? Never."

Babineau says the Delta Hawks are always looking for new members. And there are similar groups all over the world. If you're interested in joining a group in your area or starting one of your own, the Hawks' web site is a good place go for information. Check it out at *www.deltahawks.org*.

PCG

Dan Bennett

You probably think you're a pretty committed simulation fan — but groups like Northern California's Delta Hawks bring new meaning to the word dedication

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Yes sir, have we got a lot of strategy for you this month! The Strategy Central crew slams into overdrive, with the complete solutions for *Blade Runner* and *The Curse of Monkey Island*. Plus, hints for *Seven Kingdoms*, the second part of our definitive guide for *Uprising*, and answers to your requests. Whew!

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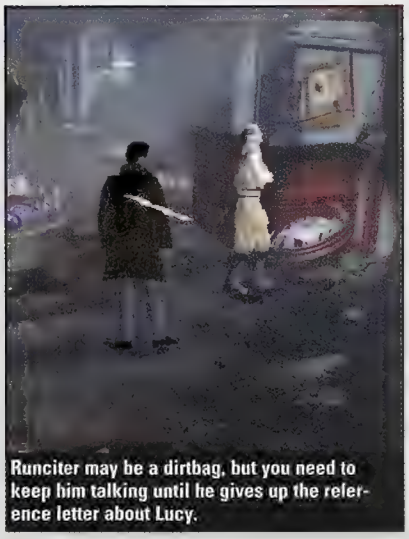
Blade Runner

200 Steps to Victory — The Complete Solution!

Thanks to the good guys and gals at Westwood Studios, we've got a comprehensive walkthrough for this excellent adventure. But bear in mind that, due to the fluctuating nature of the story line, even if you follow the steps listed below exactly, you may end up on a different path each time you approach the end game. Also, be aware that this walkthrough is based on the player having an unsympathetic agenda toward replicants.



Runciter may be a dirtbag, but you need to keep him talking until he gives up the reference letter about Lucy.

ACT ONE

You play McCoy, a tough Blade Runner on the hunt for replicants. Let's just hope the search doesn't hit too close to home...

Runciter's Crime Scene

1. Talk to the LAPD officer outside the crime scene.
2. Search the scene for possible clues.
3. Walk inside Runciter's.
4. Talk to Runciter.
5. Continue talking with him until he gives you a reference letter.
6. Click on the surveillance camera, and Runciter will give you a disc.
7. Click on the desk located at the back of the room.
8. Click on the toy dog and chopstick wrapper located on the floor.
9. Click on the candy bar located on the desk.
10. Walk back to the spinner.
11. Click on the spinner to get inside.
12. Fly to the police station.

Police Station

13. After landing, walk into the elevator and select floor #2.
14. From the hallway, enter the "Mainframe" room through the door on the right.
15. For mainframe access, click on the monitor located on the far right.
16. To access "ESPER" (viewing of enhanceable photographs) click on large monitor.
17. Select the enhanceable image on the left by clicking on it.
18. Click and drag a "box" around the small table in the rear.
19. To zoom out, click the right mouse button.
20. Click and drag a box around Lucy's head, then around her left foot and ankle.

Note: Lucy is partially concealed behind the right edge of the Tiger's cage.

21. To quit out of the image, click the left button marked "X."
22. Select and investigate the second image.
23. After quitting out of the second image, exit ESPER by clicking the "X" button again.
24. Walk back into the hallway and into the "Shed" across the hall.
25. After talking to the Sergeant, enter the "Combat Shooting Course" using the door on the right.
26. Follow the announced instructions and begin testing your target recognition and accuracy skills.
27. After completing the four stations, exit to the left, back into the hallway.

28. Check your score by clicking on the monitor located on the right wall.
29. Walk into the elevator and select floor #3 (Police Lab).
30. Get all the information you can from Dino before returning to the spinner.
31. From the spinner, select "Chinatown" as your destination.

Chinatown

32. Talk to Howie Lee (the chef) and ask him about Lucy, the Runciter clues, and his employee, Zuben.
33. Follow Zuben into the spanish kitchen located behind Howie Lee's.
34. Talk to Zuben.
35. Immediately start clicking the mouse when Zuben spills the hot pot.
36. Follow Zuben through the door and down the alley.
37. Continue through the door at the end of the alley (if you stop and talk to the homeless man, you will lose Zuben).
38. After entering the loading dock from the alley, click on the door at the top of the stairs.
39. After entering the hallway, click on the door at the end of the hall.
40. When Zuben attacks, shoot and kill him before he gets to you.
41. Walk back through the loading dock and to the waiting police spinner.
42. Talk with Gaff.
43. Walk back to the spinner and fly to your apartment.

McCoy's Apartment

44. If Zuben was lost during the earlier chase, he will be encountered on the apartment roof.
45. If Zuben is here, shoot and kill him before he kills you.
46. Enter the apartment elevator and select "McCoy 88F."
47. Walk through the apartment and into the bedroom.
48. After checking out the view from the balcony, walk back into the bedroom.
49. Click on the bed to end Act One.

ACT TWO

50. After getting Guzza's Vidphone message, take the spinner to the Tyrell Building.

Tyrell Building

51. Talk to the security guard to obtain information.
52. Take the elevator to the Grav Test control room.
53. Pick the earring and brochure off the floor and enter the Grav Test Room.
54. In the Grav Test Room, pick up the dog collar and take-out box from Kingston Kitchen (located in the center of the room).

55. Click on the body.

Some vital clues must be picked up in the Grav Test room. Searching Eisenduller's body is one of the more repulsive jobs you'll have to do in your career as a Blade Runner.

56. Exit back into the control room and click on the small monitor until you receive a disc.
57. Meet Crystal back in the lobby. She has information.
58. Ask the security guard about the crime scene.
59. Exit back to the spinner and select Police Station.

Police Station

60. Enter the elevator and select floor 2.
61. Download/upload clues and evidence at the mainframe.
62. Access ESPER and investigate the new image.
63. In ESPER, click and drag a box around the head of the suspect, the item in his back pocket, the small dog, and the carton of food.
64. Terminate the image, exit ESPER, and exit the Mainframe Room.
65. From the hallway walk into the "Shed."
66. Click on the crate located on the floor.
67. Talk to the Sergeant.
68. Pay another visit to the Combat Course if you feel the need to hone your skills.
69. While in the hallway (or anytime before going to lockup) click on yourself (McCoy). This will bring up your personal clue database.
70. After accessing the database, click on the clue icon (magnifying glass).
71. From the list of clues, click on "Grigorian interview A" and listen.
72. Click on "Grigorian interview B" and listen.
73. Enter the elevator and select "Lockup."
74. Talk to Spencer Grigorian.
75. Exit back to the elevator and return to the spinner.

While in Chinatown, you meet Zuben, who is one nasty replicant. Have your mouse finger ready so you can dodge when he dumps the pot on you.

76. Select Animoid Row as your destination.

Animoid Row is the home of some interesting characters such as Hassan the snake dealer and the Peruvian lady who runs the Dragonfly jewelry store.

77. Walk to the far end of scene and talk to Hassan the snake dealer.
78. After talking with Hassan, talk to the Peruvian Lady next door.
79. Exit left and enter Bullet Bob's.
80. Talk to Bob, purchase ammo from him, and then exit his shop.
81. Walk up the street and enter Hawker's Circle.
82. Talk to Mama Isabella about suspect Sadik and the Tyrell crime scene.
83. Keep walking through Hawker's Circle into China Bar. Talk to the bartender.
84. Exit China Bar to the right.
85. Walk to the far end to Green Pawn. Talk to Izo if he's standing in front of his shop (if he isn't, keep returning until he's there).
86. Talk to Izo about Grigorian.
87. Izo will temporarily blind you with a flash camera. Pick up the camera and enter the Green Pawn.
88. The gate is locked. Shoot the lock.
89. Go through the trap door in the floor.
90. After entering Izo's Lair, click on the weapons or crates to obtain a clue.
91. Go through the opening at the rear of Izo's Lair.

After Izo blinds you with the camera flash, he will run like a frightened child to his hidden lair. Shoot the lock off the door and follow him down the trap door in the floor.

92. Click on the opening in the ceiling and you will climb the ladder.
93. Back on the street, Izo will threaten you with his sword.
94. Crystal will enter the scene and either kill Izo or arrest him.
95. You may want to return to the underground and explore a little.
96. Return to the spinner and select "DNA Row" as the next destination.
97. Walk to Dermo Design by exiting to the left.
98. Enter Dermo Design.
99. Moraji is locked in chains. Free him by shooting the lock near his wrist.
100. After shooting the lock, exit to the street immediately,
101. While in the street, quickly move as far away from the entrance to Dermo Design as possible.

Make sure you clear the doorway so that Moraji can get out. He's still gonna buy the farm, but he's got some vital information you'll need.

102. After the explosion, walk over and talk to Moraji.
103. After talking to the cop, walk up the stairs and enter Luther/Lance's apartment.
104. Click on the "head" of the mannequin with the black mask for a clue.
105. Click on the monitor located on the left for a clue.
106. Exit the apartment and walk across the street to Chew's Eye Works.
107. Enter Chew's Eye Works and ask him about Eisenduller, the Twins, and the envelope.
108. Exit Chew's and walk down the alley to the left of the building.
109. Enter the Bradbury Hotel.
110. Walk down the long hallway and exit at the bottom of the screen.
111. Walk through the doorway to the right.
112. While in Sebastian's Foyer, click on the open doorway.
113. Continue through the room and exit to the left.
114. From the bathroom, climb up the ladder.
115. After a second, Sadik will be seen running down the hall.
116. Chase Sadik.
117. Against the wall is an old dilapidated piece of furniture with partially broken out drawers. Click on each drawer on the right row, and then click on the hole in the roof.
118. The sequence on the roof will end Act Two.

ACT THREE

Yukon Hotel

119. Click on the heater located in the shadows at the left rear of the room.
120. Click in the area of the doll to get a close-up.

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121. Click on the heel of the doll.
122. Click on the doll.
123. Before walking out of the room, click on the cheese located under the chair.
124. After talking with Leon in the hotel lobby, exit to the left.
125. While on the street outside, click on the car and the object on the floorboard.
126. Walk down the street to the left.
127. Return to the spinner by exiting to the right.
128. Return to the Police Station Mainframe room and upload/download clues.
129. Return the spinner and select Hysteria Hall as your destination.

Note: Lucy is one of the characters you must interact with. She can be found inside Hysteria Hall playing one of the arcade games. If she is not there, you need to return from time to time until you meet her.

Hysteria Hall

130. Ask the hot dog vendor about Lucy and about the cheese.
131. Enter the used car lot and talk to Crazy Leggs Larry.
132. Enter Hysteria Hall and check to see if Lucy is there.
133. Talk to Lucy if she is there.
134. When she runs, chase her. If she runs into the Hall of Mirrors, run to the right exit.
135. After Lucy escapes return to the spinner and select Animoid Row.
136. Talk to Mama Isabella about the cheese, and to the Peruvian Lady about the insect jewelry.

Night Club Row

138. Enter Taffy Lewis' bar on the right.

Note: Gordo is another character you must interact with. he can be found inside Taffy's. He is the guy with the red jacket.

139. Walk to the bar and talk to Gordo.

140. **Hang around until he finishes his act.**

Gordo may not be the best comedian around, but it's important that you stay until the end of his act, no matter how painful that may be.

141. When Gordo runs, chase him into the street.
142. If Gordo has a gun, shoot him. If he doesn't, then let him go.
143. Walk across the street and enter Early's bar.
144. Click on the dancer on the stage. When Hanoi the bouncer starts walking toward the stage, click on the revolving booth.
145. After gaining access to Early's private lounge, talk to Early (he's the one with the red tails).
146. When Early exits the room and makes the announcement of the upcoming act, exit to the left.
147. After Dektora completes her dance, exit to the left.
148. Enter Dektora's dressing room and talk to her.
149. After Crystal frees McCoy, exit the room through the hole in the wall.
150. Walk across the tunnel and exit to the right.
151. Continue out of the subway by walking up the stairs.
152. After the meeting with Crystal, you will return to Early's bar.
153. After Crystal leaves, walk up the stairs.
154. Walk into the projection room and encounter Dektora.
155. While she directs a light into your eyes, fire your weapon.
156. Follow Dektora up the ladder into the attic.
157. Shoot at one of the wardrobe closets.
158. Dektora will emerge on fire and attack you. Shoot her.
159. After the conversation with Crystal, Act Three will end.

137. **Return to the spinner and select Night Club Row.**

Early is the fellow in the red tails. You can gain access to his private lounge by luring the bouncer away from the revolving booth when you first enter the bar.

ACT FOUR

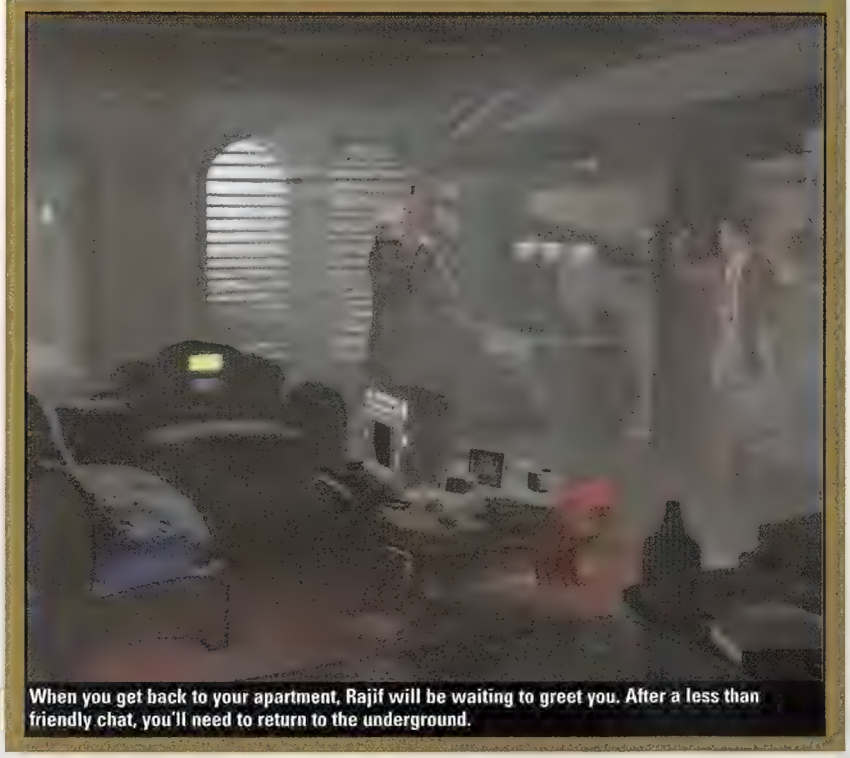
Under Ground

Note: During Act Four, shoot at anything that attacks you (cops, rats, mutants, or replicants).

160. Leave the subway room by walking off the left edge of the screen.
161. Continue across the tunnel and back through the hole in the wall.
162. Click on the heavy metal door and enter the room with the intersection.
163. Walk down the catwalk and exit to the left.
164. Click on the left exit to walk down the stairs and follow the catwalk to the left.
165. Exit up through the manhole.
166. From the open manhole, walk into your apartment building.
167. Take the elevator to your apartment.

After she fails the Voigt-Kampff test, Dektora will try to save her tail by calling in some of her replicant friends to help her.

168. After encountering Rajif, return to the underground.



When you get back to your apartment, Rajif will be waiting to greet you. After a less than friendly chat, you'll need to return to the underground.

169. Retrace your steps back to the room with the intersection.
170. Click on the tunnel opening.
171. From the tunnel, click on the right exit and enter the elevator room.
172. Exit the room using the elevator.
173. Talk to the homeless man if he is there.
174. Click on the small item lying on the table (requisition form).
175. Exit through the tunnel on the right. This will take you to the entrance to Luther/Lance's underground lab.
176. Click on the entrance to the lab. When the rat starts his attack, immediately walk to a position off the plank and to the near side of it.
177. Do not shoot the rat until he is all the way to the near end of the plank.
178. After killing the rat, enter Luther/Lance's lab.
179. If Luther/Lance are here, strike up a conversation.
180. Draw your weapon. When you see the target cursor, rapidly fire at Luther/Lance until dead.
181. Click on both monitors located behind Luther/Lance. You will obtain a disc and a file on Guzza.
182. Walk up the stairs at the far end of the room. This will take you to Luther/Lance's apartment.
183. Look at the bank of monitors on the right. Click on the upper left monitor and listen to a conversation with Guzza.
184. Return to the underground and to the room with the homeless man.
185. Click on the metal gate in the upper left of the room.
186. Meet with Guzza.
187. After Guzza is killed, immediately double click on the left exit.
188. Leave the underground and return to your apartment.
189. In the tunnel, Clovis will grab you through the bars and break your fingers. When Clovis turns you loose, immediately click on the exit at the bottom of the screen.

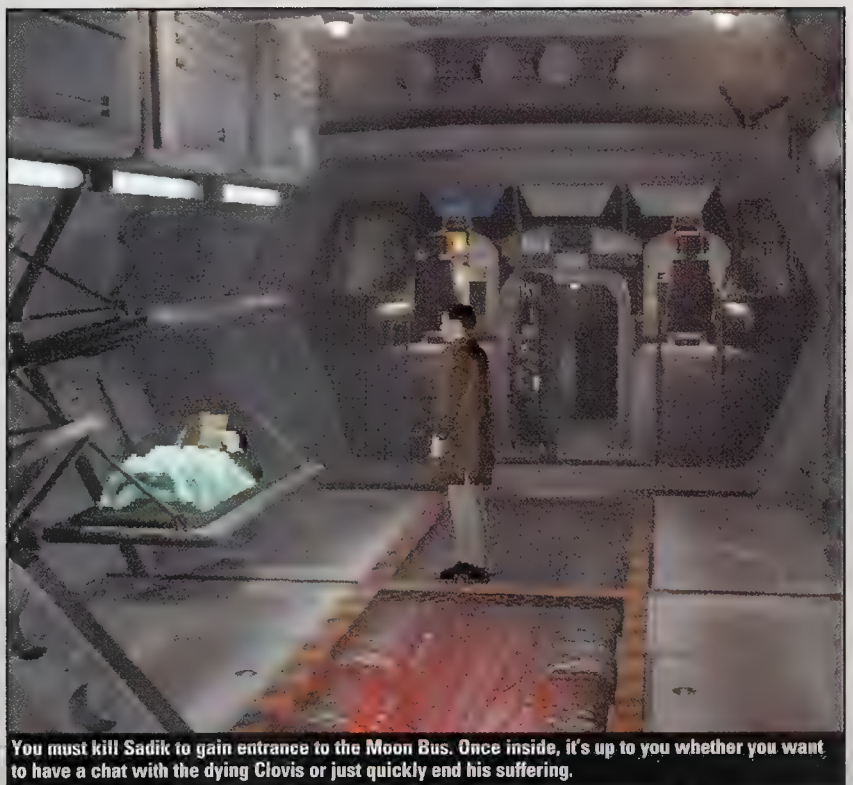
After you go through the open doorway at the top of the screen, you will be attacked by rats. Either shoot them before they reach you or run like hell off the left side of the screen.

190. Continue to your apartment where Act Four ends.

ACT FIVE

191. In the apartment, walk to the bedroom and click on the vidphone.
192. After listening to the conversation, return to the underground.
193. After you climb down through the manhole, click on the right exit.
194. While standing in the room with the large pool, click on the open doorway at the top of the screen.
195. Walk to the North exit.
196. Shoot and kill both rats, or immediately exit to the left.
197. After meeting up with Crystal, you will encounter a "bomb" trap set by Sadik.
198. Click on the blinking light before Crystal walks through and sets it off.
199. Encounter and kill Sadik in the next scene.
200. Walk into the Moon Bus and interact with Clovis. Hooray, you've won! Er, unless you're a replicant.

PCG



You must kill Sadik to gain entrance to the Moon Bus. Once inside, it's up to you whether you want to have a chat with the dying Clovis or just quickly end his suffering.

WARNING:
YOU MUST BE 17 OR OLDER

GRAND THEFT AUTO

6'6"
6'0"
5'6"
5'0"
4'6"
4'0"
3'6"
3'0"

"Okay, I admit. I like to blow things up! It started with my baby sister's doll house, and well... it just went from there!"

"Stealing cars gives me a rush. In fact, stealing anything gives me a rush."

"I prefer sleek, fast cars with room in the back. Know what I mean!?"

PlayStation

Windows® 95 Compatible
PC CD-ROM

DMA Design Ltd.

MATURE
M
AGES 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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It's a crime.

"I dunno what's so special here. It's a game about everyday life, ain't it?"

"Using a flame thrower on a rival gang just gives me that warm and fuzzy feeling all over."

"It's all about three things - fast cars, easy money and... fast cars."

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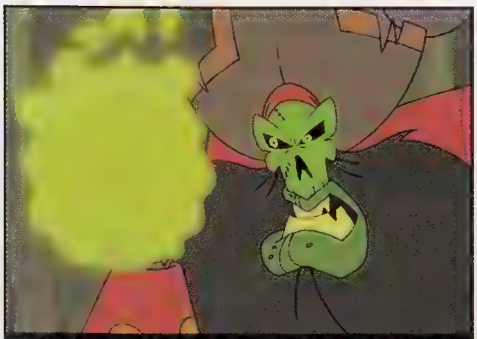
Product Information Number 81

The Curse Of Monkey Island

What's this washed up on the shore? Why, it's the journal of Guybrush Threepwood! Maybe he can help us through this tough game...

Once again, the Strategy Central crew has come up with a winner. Thanks to *PCG* reader Mark Dennison and the good folks at LucasArts, we present you with the complete solution to this fabulous adventure.



The flaming zombie pirate LeChuck has a crush on Elaine — and a score to settle with Guybrush Threepwood.

Part I: The Demise of the Zombie Pirate LeChuck

After being thrown by LeChuck's evil pirates into the hole aboard his ship, my eyes revealed the little guy with me was no less than Wally B. Feed from Scabb Island. To let me operate the cannon to destroy LeChuck's forces and save Elaine, I had to convince Wally that he was no good as a pirate by commenting on his smallness and lack of realistic beard. But he was ready to take aim and shoot by my comments. I knew he would crack under pressure when I said to him that he hadn't the guts, and that he wouldn't dare.

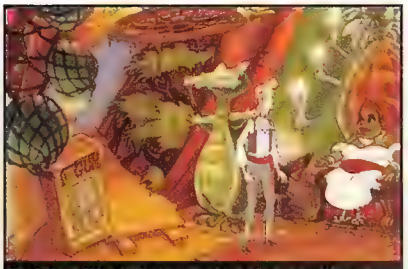
I then collected his scary pirate hook and the ramrod on the wall at the back of the room, before combining the two to make a gaff. Next, I took hold of the cannon and destroyed LeChuck's smaller units out in the bay. After this, I walked out by the cannon and used the gaff on the debris to collect a cutlass. Having had a few words with that demonic and unpleasant skull Murray, notably asking how he can see without eyeballs, I used the gaff on him, allowing him to plunge into the waters below.

Cutting the rope on the cannon with the cutlass, and again using the cannon, fired me into a chamber full of the most unimaginable wealth. So I snatch a bag of nickels to the left of where I was standing, revealing a diamond ring which I collected and used on the porthole to the right.

Part II: The Curse Gets Worse

After swimming to the shore and meeting my darling Elaine, I place the ring on her finger only to find it to be a cursed ring turning the wearer of it into solid gold. And so I collected a burning ember from the shore and left the beach. From the map, the next location I visited was Voodoo Priestess's swamp, west of the Fort. Here I spoke with Murray, but for little purpose, who had worked his way to the top of the entrance. Inside the ship, I collected the pin from the voodoo doll and used my wooden nickels on the gum machine. It appeared to me that for mega monkey adventurers, I needed to collect the paste from the floor. I then spoke to the Voodoo Priestess by pulling the alligator's tongue and found out that I should have hidden the statue of Elaine from pirates. From this moment, I knew that my journeys would take me to Blood Island.

I then walked into the town toward the east, entering via the east entrance. I then went up the steps and entered the theatre via the stage door. Inside this darkened room, I opened the pocket of the pirate coat on the left of the room and took out the glove. By looking at the coat more closely, I also found some dandruff, which I collected. From the desk, I collected and used the magic wand on the hat and picked up the ventriloquist's book which appeared. After looking at the Blood Island sticker on the worn travel truck, I hopped further inside



Pull the alligator's tongue to gain an audience with the Voodoo Priestess – she'll tell you that you should have hidden the statue of Elaine.

to the stage and asked the central guy about Blood Island to find out that Palido Domingo, who I was to meet later, could assist.

I then exited the theatre and walked down the steps towards the barber shop on the pier. Inside I collected the jawbreaker from the floor. For mega monkey players, note that I needed to hit the bald pirate in the top corner twice to find this item (although hitting him once makes him amusingly turn a shade of purple!). Using the lice I had collected on the comb on the table when it is put down, I managed to sit down in the barber's chair and get a haircut. To collect the paperweight from the table, I used the handle on the chair once to raise me to a sufficient height before kicking it. After Haggis, the barber pirate, left to find a new paperweight, I repeatedly used the handle to raise me to the ceiling, and then collected the scissors.

Next, I hit the pirate at the left of the shop with my glove, challenging him to a duel. I closed the lid of the middle gun box and selected the banjo. After following each of the individual notes at the end of each section of music, I walked over to the gun pile and picked up a pistol, before shooting the duelling banjo.

The hairdresser pirate at the Barbery Coast can pose some problems, but nothing you can't handle with the help of this complete solution. Collect the jawbreaker from the floor by hitting the bald pirate twice on the head. Also, once you're in the chair, use the handle to raise the chair and grab the scissors from the ceiling.

After trying to collect some objects from this cliff, you'll be eaten by the snake. Don't panic — there are some goodies inside his belly that will be useful later.

Then I went to the west of Puerto Pollo to the mysterious flowers, just next to Kenny's lemonade stand. Using the scissors on this undergrowth to pick up the Ipecac flower, I then hacked my way through. After trying to collect an object from the cliff edge, I was consumed by a snake. Inside, I collected a Faberge egg, some vacuum cleaner attachments and lots-o-stuff, which included a reservation slip for the restaurant to the left of the bridge in Puerto Pollo. Combining the newly collected pancake syrup with the ipecac, and then feeding this deadly formula to the snake saw me end up in a swamp near Danjer Cove.

I collected a reed from the growth to the right, and a thorn from the plant to the left and combined the two. Using the paperweight rock with a balloon and blowing it towards the life-saving vine set-up my means of escape. I then used the vine pea-shooter on the balloon to release the vine before returning to Puerto Pollo - this time, to the chicken restaurant.

In the restaurant, I needed to collect a membership card for the beach club from inside the gross chicken and Blondebeard's golden tooth from the floor. To obtain Captain Blondebeard's golden tooth, I had to offer him the jawbreaker from the barber's and some of my chewing gum (I remember also offering some to Murray outside the Voodoo Priestess's ship). I then popped his balloon with my voodoo pin to release the tooth onto the floor. Mega monkey adventurers should also be aware of the following: I had to chew some of the gum myself, which I stuck to the gold tooth. I then inhaled helium from my own balloon, and chewed on the gum with the tooth in. Before leaving the shop I needed to collect the biscuit cutter and pie pan from the hatch on the left, which I used in the muddy puddle outside to steal from Blondebeard his golden tooth. I also had to take a biscuit from the box on the right, eat it to reveal maggots, and feed these to the gross chicken on the table in order to collect the card inside the chicken.

Whatever difficulty you have selected, I needed to push the quiet patron at the table and collect the serrated bread knife. I then visited the grassy knoll where earlier I fought long and hard in my banjo duel. For mega monkey adventurers, I then used my biscuit cutter on the second rubber tree from the left. The bread knife was used on the sawhorse and the glowing ember on the trail of rum, before I returned to the barber shop, giving the gold tooth to the salty bald pirate, and challenging Haggis to a caber contest, which I won easily with my rubber caber.

I then felt it best to chill for a while on the beach towards the east of the island. After showing my membership card to the cabana boy guarding the entrance, I took a towel, put it into the ice bucket, and slapped the boy with it. I collected his oil and then three more towels, which I again dipped into the ice bucket. Moving on to Brimstone Beach, I used my dampened towels on the hot sand to work my way across, where I met Palido Domingo. I picked up his mug and visited Kenny's lemonade stand on the west of Puerto Pollo, where I switched Palido's mug for Kenny's. I then asked for some lemonade, collected the pitcher, and filled it with the red dye to the right of the stall. Returning to the beach, I returned Kenny's bottomless mug to Palido and poured the pitcher's red dye in this mug to trick him into thinking he ought to turn over. I then poured cooking oil onto his back and peeled off the map.

Returning to Danjer Cove, I remember pasting my piece of rubber tree to the hole in the boat, and then sailing to the pirate ship. To climb aboard, I sawed off the plank with the bread knife. After being attacked by monkeys, I found myself looking remarkably like the demon chicken picture in Blondebeard's restaurant. So I returned there, only to be put in a large pot and returned back on the ship, with Mr. Fossey and LeChimp. Using the ventriloquism book on LeChimp, I managed to coerce Fossey into abandoning his monkey business. In the pot on the table I found the map to where Elaine was buried. To escape the boat, I opened the window and jumped onto the log below, before returning to the theatre.

I figured that each of the directions on the map corresponded to the buttons controlling the lights on the upper floor in the theatre. So I pulled the lever, and pressed the buttons in this order: South-East, North-West, West, South, East, North-East twice (after the first press, I

Ah, chickens. In the town of Puerto Pollo, there's something very strange going on with chickens. You'll need to feed the gross chicken some maggots in order to collect the card found inside.

At Danjer Cove, you'll need to paste a piece of rubber tree to the hole in your rowboat so that you can use it to travel to the pirate ship in the distance. Don't even think of swimming; there are sharks about.

remember seeing a memory from Sam 'n' Max on the stage), East and South-West. 'X' marks the spot. In the side-entrance room, used the grease on the cannon-balls, watched a small performance, and then used the shovel on the stage. The 'X' did mark the spot. Elaine was there, but only in solid gold form. I set sail for Blood Island in the hope of finding a diamond to release the curse.

Part III: Three Sheets to the Wind

My crew began singing and I thought it would never stop. But after a few responses I sang a line suggesting that we would "surely avoid scurvy if we all ate an orange" — this shut them up. Then we planned a course of attack on Captain Rottingham by looking at the map on the table. On my way I had to fight against a number of deadly pirates. To fight, I had to learn a number of insults and test them out on pirates to learn the appropriate responses just like in my adventures back on the Island of Melee.

After each successive victory, I returned to Plunder Town Harbor to exchange the booty with a new cannon from Kenny's shop. I remember it being important not to go back into battle with booty on ship, or face losing it to other pirates. Only after progressing to the Destructomatic T-47 was I ready to fight against Rottingham himself and reclaim my map.

Key

SI = The insult used by standard pirates.
RI = The insult used by Rottingham.
A = The most appropriate answer.

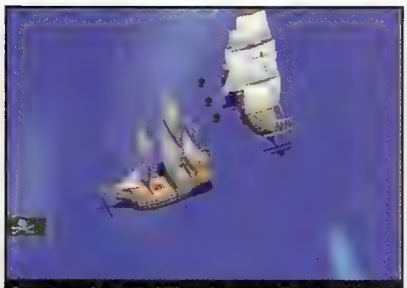
SI: You're as repulsive as a monkey in a negligee.
RI: You have the sex appeal of a Shai-Pei.
A: I look THAT much like your financée.

SI: Every enemy I've met, I've annihilated!
RI: My attacks have made entire islands depopulated.
A: With your breath, I'm sure they all suffocated.

SI: I'll hound you night and day.
RI: You'll find I'm dogged and relentless to my prey.
A: Then be a good dog. Sit! Stay!

SI: Would you like to be buried or cremated?
RI: I give you a choice, you can be gutted or decapitated!
A: With you around, I'd prefer to be fumigated.

SI: I'll leave you devastated, mutilated and perforated.
RI: I can't tell you which of my traits has you most intimidated.
A: Your odor alone makes me aggravated, irritated, infuriated.



Avast, me hearties! There's some ship-to-ship duelling to do in one of *Curse of Monkey Island*'s sporadic arcade sequences.

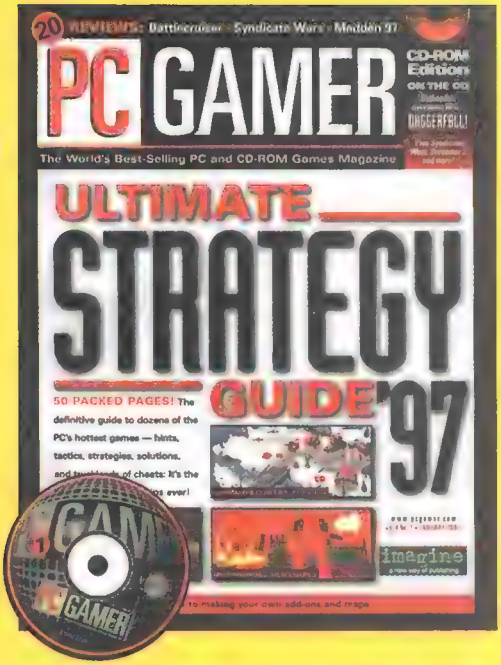
SI: I have never seen such clumsy swordplay.
RI: I have never lost a melee.
A: You would have, but you're always running away.

SI: Heaven preserve me! You look like something that's died!
RI: Nothing on this earth can save your sorry hide.
A: The only way you'll be preserved is in formaldehyde.

SI: Coming face to face with me must leave you petrified.
RI: Never before have I faced someone so sissified.
A: Is that your face? I thought it was your backside!

SI: You're the ugliest monster ever created!
RI: Your looks would make pigs nauseated.
A: If you don't count all the ones you've dated.

Yes, it's a homage to *Deliverance* in this duelling banjos scene between Guybrush and a sinister cut-throat — but since when did the pirates of the carribean play the banjo?



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SI: Killing you would be justifiable homicide!
RI: When I'm done your body will be rotted and putrefied.
A: Then killing you would be justifiable fungicide!

SI: I can't rest 'til you've been exterminated!
RI: Your stench would make an outhouse cleaner irritated.
A: Then perhaps you should switch to decaffeinated.

SI: I'll skewer you, like a sow at a buffet!
RI: Your lips look like they belong on the catch of the day.
A: When I'm done with YOU, you'll be a boneless fillet.

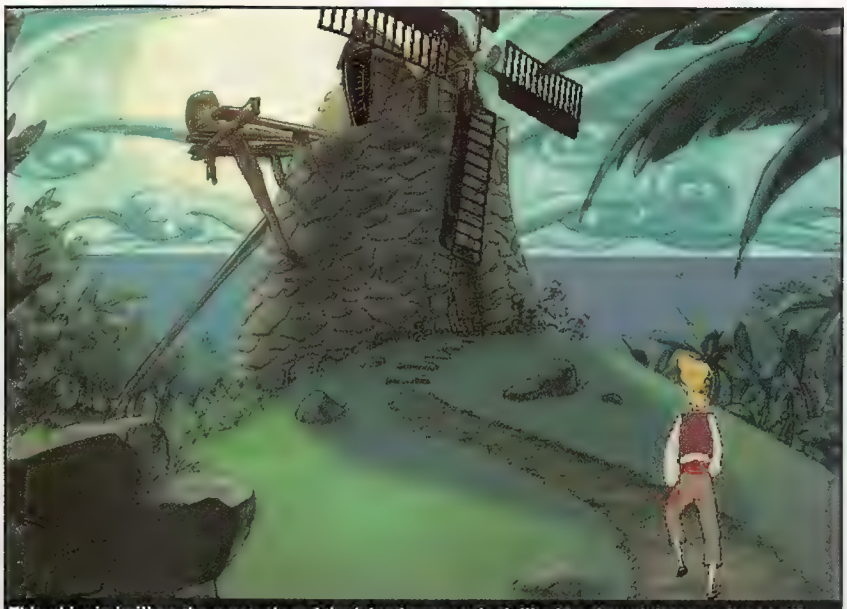
SI: Throughout the Caribbean, my great deeds are celebrated.
RI: My skills with a sword are highly venerated.
A: Too bad they're all fabricated.

SI: En garde! Touché!
RI: Your mother wears a toupee.
A: Oh, that is so cliché!

SI: You can match my witty repartee!
RI: Nothing can stop me from blowing you away.
A: I could, if you would use some breath spray.

Part IV: The Bartender, the Thieves, his Wife, and her Lover

Blood Island! I was on my own once again, however, for my crew had decided to put their efforts into repairing the ship to sail back to Plunder Island. So I picked up the bottle of shaving soap on the shore and, when in mega monkey mode, bit it to remove the cork. From here I journeyed to the west of the island, to the cemetery. Inside, I walked left, collected some smelly hair from the dog, a mallet, and a chisel. I next fed a biscuit to the dog. Gee willickers, did it hurt!



This old windmill on the west edge of the island may not look like it's of much interest, but you'll need to visit here to collect a vital ingredient — the chilli pepper.

Out of the cemetery, I visited the hotel on the hill, entering the building via the door on the left, and spoke to the chunky fortune teller. After receiving five death cards, I collected the recipe book and removed the cushion from the stool on the left of the bar. In the room at the back, I used the chisel on the wheel of cheese. I also picked up the Big Whoop magnet from the refrigerator.

I then walked to the beach on the south coast and laid the cushion onto the rocks below the rubber tree. To collect the egg, I then hit the tree with the mallet. A third ingredient was found by the Windmill on the west edge of the island: the (chilli) pepper.

Wow, it's a genuine smuggler's cove! Is it really such a good idea to play cards against these nefarious swabs? Oh, go on then — but don't say we didn't warn you...

Back at the hotel, I gave the following items to the bartender to create the hangover cure as described in the recipe book: the egg, the pepper and the dog hair — he gave me the remainder of the Head-B-Clear in a convenient bottle. I was then able to pick up the empty jar on the bar, use the chisel on it, and ordered a drink with an umbrella. The umbrella was more than I expected. I then used the chisel on the Head-B-Clear, poured the contents into my Caribbean Body Slam on the bar and drunk it. Bang.

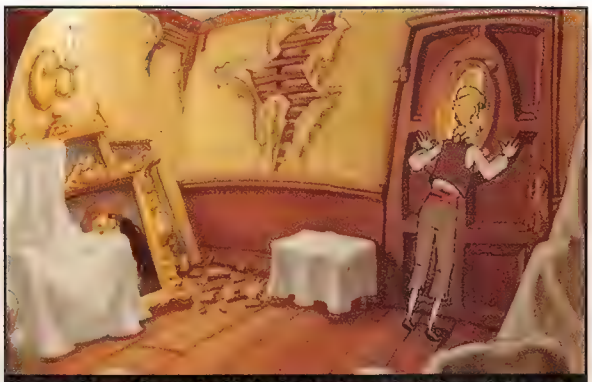
Using the chisel on the coffin in the lower-right hand corner and then on the coffin in the center of the crypt, I freed my old friend Stan, who I had banged up back on Booty Island. He let me in on the secret of the security of his crypts: just shake the doors. Stan said that he was setting up business, so I collected the nails from my coffin and left the cemetery. I returned immediately to buy some life insurance, payment made by Blondebeard's golden tooth.

Back at the hotel, I walked upstairs, opened the left-hand door and used the mallet on the nail in the damaged part of the wall. For mega-monkey adventurers, in the hallway, I picked up the painting and the nail, and used the scissors on it to separate a face from a border. I then attached the border of the portrait to the left-hand door and went back inside. To make the bartender accept me as one of his family, I looked through the porthole of the door. Back in the hallway, I used Stan's business card on the second door to free the latch, and went inside.

For all adventurers, using the nails on the bed which I pulled down, I acquired the book on the Goodsoup family and chatted to the bartender back downstairs. I then stated that I was one of the family, and wanted to be buried in the family crypt. For mega monkey adventurers, note that I picked up the mirror and replaced in the frame the face from the portrait.

Back at the windmill, I needed to fill both my cup and jar with water from the barrel. Mega monkey adventurers must note that using the umbrella from the cocktail was required to ascend to the top windwill.

My next stop was the cannibal village high up on the island to the north-west of the hotel. I collected a measuring cup and some tofu, on which I used the chisel. Wearing the tofu after using the chisel on it, I proceeded further into village and spoke to Lemonhead, who I met previously on Monkey Island. Following the cult ceremony, I tossed the un-melted nacho cheese into the volcano.



You need to get in good with the bartender, so look through the porthole, and he will accept you as one of the family.

Back at the beach on which my ship was wrecked, I spoke to Haggis about his bottle of hand lotion, and he told me that he needed tar, or a tar-compatible. So, back at the hotel I placed some of my cheese into the cooking pot on the barbecue, and took the pot back to Haggis. In exchange as promised, he gave me his lotion. This meant that at the clearing nearby where Elaine had been hidden, I could use the lotion on her fingers and remove the ring. Next, I placed the jar of sugar water on the tree stump, pierced the jar lid with the chisel, put the lid on the jar and used it in the lighthouse. Mega monkey adventurers need to take into account that I had to swap the broken lighthouse mirror with the mirror stolen from the hotel.

Returning to the hotel, I bought some grog from the bartender and again mixed some of my Head-B-Clear with it. After drinking it, I died again. But Minnie "Stronie" Goodsoup, the ghost bride, comforted me when I spoke to her in the crypt. Walking left, I again came across Murray, who nearly scared me, so I picked him up, along with a crowbar jammed in a coffin. Looking through the crack in the wall, I then used the skeleton arm on the lamp. Mega monkey players must note that I applied paste to the arm. Next, I placed the lantern on the coffin lid and then used Murray with it. This convinced Mort, the crypt keeper, to open the door. Outside, I returned to the hotel to collect my death certificate from the back room with the cheese wheel.

Upstairs, in the far room, I used the crowbar on first the boarded hole and second the bed. Wheeeee. I then collected the wedding ring from Charles and Minnie DeGoulash in the crypt, before revisiting Stan's and cashing in my life insurance policy.

Back on the beach, I then gave the Flying Welshman a compass consisting of my measuring cup and fridge-magnetized voodoo pin with cork attachment. I sailed out to Skull Island (Even though it's really a duck). Talking to winch operator LaFoot, I asked him to lower me down to the smuggler's cave below. But when the winch appeared to be failing, I used my umbrella to slow my fall. Inside, I spoke to the pirates and initiated a game of poker. Switching their cards for the death cards that I collected from the hotel, I managed to 'win' the enormous Goodsoup family diamond. Combining this with the engagement band, I place the ring on the finger of my beloved Elaine.

Part V: Kiss of the Spider Monkey

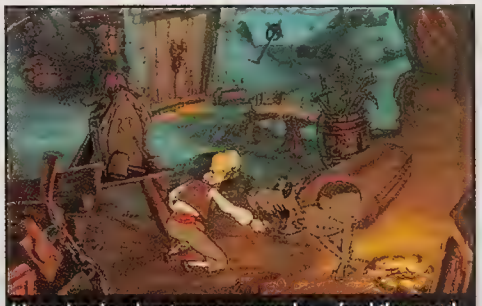
After a looooong conversation with LeChuck, I opened the door of the cable car carriage. I then spoke to Dinghy Dog about winning one of the fabulous prizes, and won by asking him to guess how old I was. Murray was irritating me, so I chose the anchor as the prize. Mega monkey adventures must note that I combined the shaving cream with the pie pan and the anchor, and placed the completed meringue pie on Wharf Rat's pile o' pies. For lesser mortals, I simply collected the anchor from the shelf and placed it in one of the Wharf Rat's pies.

Next, I opened the gate and looked through the pie hole and absorbed meringue. Following this, I repeatedly pushed Dinghy Dog until he bit me and gave me some of his hair. I then collected the pepper mill from soda jerk's stall and combined this with the hair and the meringue on the snow cone, which I was given by the soda jerk. Eating this concoction allowed me to return to normal.

Part VI: Guybrush Kicks Butt Once Again

Jumping off the roller-coaster carriage at the first stop (with the three-headed monkey) I collected some rope which had fallen. At the second stop (with LeChuck's ship in the background) I collected a keg o' rum. At the third (with Guybrush tied on a rack), I collected a flash of oil. Mega monkey adventurers should note that I had to open the lantern and blow out the light before collecting the oil. At the fourth stop (the icy backdrop), I used the rum on the giant monkey, the oil on the rope and the rope on the keg. When LeChuck appeared, I used pepper on him, and buried him alive. For good. Hopefully. Maybe. In fact, I hope I'm back in a fourth game in the legendary Monkey Island series.

PCG



It's a classic adventure game puzzle — feed the guard dog to get him on your side. But what to feed a mangy mutt like this? Maybe this chunk of cheese will suffice.

Meet Dinghy Dog. Ask him to guess your age — he'll get it wrong and you can take your pick of the prizes on offer. We recommend the anchor, which you can then place in one of the Wharf Rat's pies.

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Uprising, Part 2

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Last month, we took you step-by-step through the first six planets of this revolutionary real-time strategy action game from 3DO. Now, we bring you the second part of the walkthrough and additional hints you'll need to survive — and win.

Have your secondary weapon set to Helix Missile to take care of air strikes.

Attila

Claim your first citadel and build two Power Buildings and one Tank Production Facility. Place two SAMs north of your citadel and a turret to the south. While your Power Buildings are extracting power, strengthen your defense by teleporting in tanks as they are produced.

Have your secondary weapon set to Helix Missiles and be prepared to shoot down AAVs and Bombers that will be coming in from the north. After defending against one Imperium attack, your Power Buildings should be close to extracting all the power. When they are done, sell them and purchase one Infantry Production Facility and a Bomber Production Facility.

Make your way north following the western coast. You'll encounter native facilities guarded by scattered Light Turrets and SAMs. Use your units and bombers to deal with the facilities while you hunt down the defensive turrets. As you move north, switch to your secondary weapon, the Helix Missile, so you'll be ready to deal with the AAVs.

At the northwest corner of the map, you will see a second command bunker. Partially hidden to the east of the command bunker are a Heavy Turret and a Native AAV Facility. Make sure you take out the Heavy Turret before calling for a citadel drop. As your citadel is coming online, use your Helix missiles to destroy any AAVs while you are sending units at the native facility. When your citadel comes online, jump into it and begin attacking the targets to the east. If you have plenty of power in your reserves, purchase a second Infantry Production Facility and your first AAV Production Facility.

Progress east along the northern coast. Before you run into the native facilities again, you'll want to sell your Bomber Production Facility and replace it with an Infantry Booster Facility. When you meet the native forces, call in a variety of units to fight the battle and take out their buildings. As usual, you'll want to take out any guarding turrets yourself as you continue to supply more units to the battlefield.

Just to the south, you'll find two native bomber buildings. As these two are responsible for many attacks upon your citadels, destroying them will ease some of the threat.

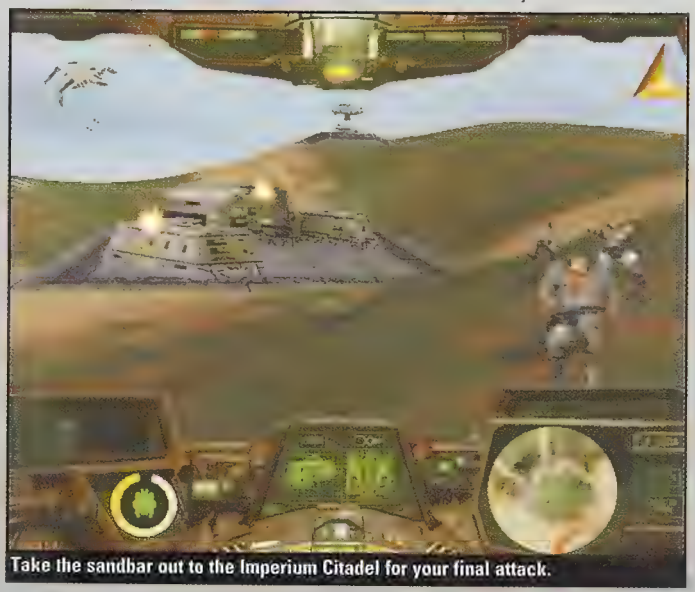
Further to the east is another enemy citadel. While boosted infantry are valuable pieces on the battlefield, you may want a stronger force going in to attack the Imperium. Consider selling your AAV Production Facility and replacing it with the powerful Bomber Production Facility.

As you attack the enemy citadel at the northeast corner, you may want to alter slightly from the normal strategy. Just to the south of the citadel is a Native AAV Facility that will supply additional AAVs for Imperium defense. While the Imperium citadel does a perfect job of guarding the AAV facility, your first bomber (if you have them) should be targeted at the AAV facility rather than the citadel. However, target your infantry and tanks at the citadel itself and let your bombers take care of the native facility.

When you are in control of the citadel, use it to replace either your AAV facility or bomber facility and purchase a Tank Booster Facility, then progress south.

After dealing with the two Heavy Turrets, turn west to attack the second enemy citadel. As you will be coming at it from behind, you will not see the half circle of Heavy Turrets on the other side. Keep an eye out for them, as a few shots will destroy your Wraith. While you are attacking the citadel it is a good strategy to target your bombers on the Heavy Turrets to slowly take them out while your infantry can deal with the citadel itself.

After claiming the citadel and building a facility of your choice, backtrack west until you find another enemy citadel. The terrain helps the citadel be well defended, which is why the Imperium usually places its more important buildings here. Just north of the citadel is a native facility that is often



Take the sandbar out to the Imperium Citadel for your final attack.

It is important to make use of your power triangle to succeed in this mission, shifting from speed and weapons to shields at the appropriate times.

overlooked. This facility supplies a good amount of units to help protect the citadel from being destroyed. Send a bomber or two in the native facilities' direction and it will surely be destroyed. Use the normal strategy of surrounding the citadel with units while taking out its perimeter defenses.

Heading south after constructing your defenses will take you to a sandbar that will bring you out to the main Imperium citadel. Like the one you just attacked, valuable Imperium buildings can be found here (usually the Imperium's KSAT facility). As the terrain is very restrictive you will surely find yourself circling around the base of the hill that the citadel sits on. Watch out for the Heavy Turrets, as you will often come within their range as you are avoiding the citadel cannon.

After taking this citadel, the Imperium will be severely weakened and ultimately awaiting your final attack. Move along the southern sandbar and head northwest until you reach land. Similar to an earlier Imperium citadel, you will come at this one from the back with the front being guarded by a half circle of Heavy Turrets. This citadel has the best native defenses out of any of the citadels on this map. However, as you own all but one of the citadels on this map, you will have enough firepower to overwhelm the Imperium citadel before the native units become a factor. When the citadel is destroyed, go ahead and clean up some of the native facilities so that your citadel will safely come online. When it does, and you are in control of the whole map, your mission is accomplished.

Fenris

Before you begin the mission, purchase a few units.

Start the mission, claim a citadel, and build an energy building while you are still in the claim square. Remain in the claim square and place two turrets around where the citadel tower lands. Continue to remain in the claim square until the second set of AAVs beam in.

Shift your power triangle to speed. Move along the outside road toward the citadel in the middle of the northern part of the map. When you come to the heavy turrets, shift your power triangle to weapons and take them out with lasers.

When you have destroyed the heavy turrets close to the citadel platform, enter the claim square and call in a citadel. Build an energy building, call in two turrets on the edges of the alcove and a SAM site toward the back of the alcove, then destroy the remainder of the heavy turrets in the area.

Shift your power triangle back to speed and claim the citadel in the northwest corner of the map. Build an energy building, two turrets, and a SAM site. Remain in the claim square until the second set of AAVs beam in.

Follow your units toward the citadel in the middle of the west portion of the map. Again, shift your power triangle to weapons to remove most of the opposing heavy turrets.

Since this citadel is owned by the Imperium, you should not try to take it yet. Instead move your Wraith to the citadel in the southwest corner of the map and claim it. Build an energy building, two turrets, and a SAM site. Again, remain in the claim square until the second set of AAVs beam-in.

Hopefully you are shifting between your power triangle, setting whenever it is appropriate.

Move to the citadel in the southeast corner of the map. If the citadel is owned by the Imperium, use your free units to destroy it, and then claim it. Build an energy building, two turrets, and a SAM site.

Now go to your overhead map view and select each citadel in turn, noticing the remaining energy lode in each. Sell off any energy buildings that are no longer mining energy. Replace the sold energy buildings, first with two infantry buildings, then an infantry booster building. Remain in the claim square until the second set of AAVs beams in.

Now follow your units toward the citadel in the middle of the southern side of the map. Clean up the heavy turrets and call in your soldiers to take the citadel.

When you have the citadel, build an

Cubby holes harbor bonus boxes that are randomly generated every couple of minutes.

ADDITIONAL HINTS

FENRIS

- If you run out of money, go to a claim square of a citadel that is ready to teleport your units, wait for the units to beam in, then recycle them.
- There are little cubbyholes in an octagonal pattern around the map where four bonus boxes are being randomly generated every couple of minutes. You can use these to replenish your ammo and get free units. Note: If you're in speed mode you can jump across the trenches to the next cubby.
- You can save time travelling across the map if you are good enough to get to the teleporters behind the side citadels.

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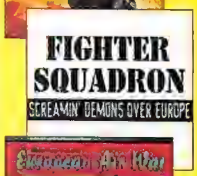

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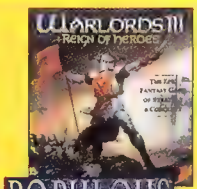

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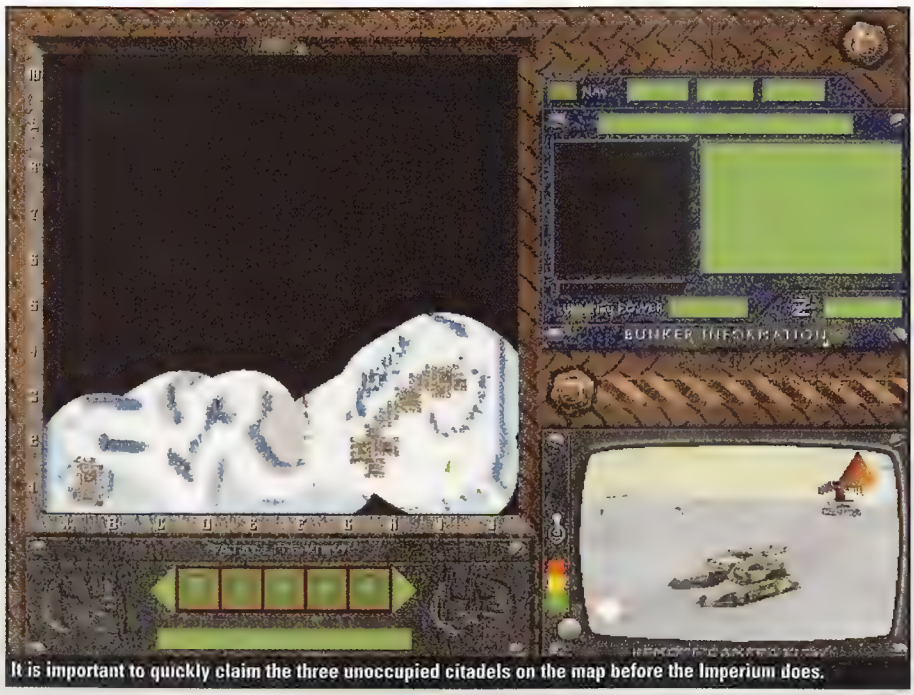

It is important to quickly claim the three unoccupied citadels on the map before the Imperium does.

energy building and check your citadels again for superfluous buildings, replacing them with unit production buildings. Now cycle through your citadels using the F12 key in the citadel view. At each citadel, call in any missing turrets and load the area to the maximum with soldiers. This will protect your citadel while you focus on the remaining citadels.

You can take the two citadels to the west and east fairly easily. All you have to do is go to the citadels to the north and south of them, wait for all the units to beam in, then assist them in the carnage with soldiers. Just remember to clear the citadel platform area of heavy turrets first.

When you possess all of the citadels except the center citadel, shift to speed mode and travel to the citadels to the north, east, south, and west, waiting for the units to beam in, then follow the last of your units into the center and clean house.

The mission ends when you own the last citadel, and it is fully powered-up.

Rhemmorah

It is important to quickly claim the three unoccupied citadels on the map before the Imperium does. Setting up two bomber facilities at the third citadel is a surefire way to bring the Imperium to its knees. Watch out for ambushes, and be sure to immediately return to your citadels if they have been hit by an Imperial KSAT attack.

After taking the first citadel at the level start position, purchase infantry and energy buildings, and set up perimeter defenses. Travel northwest into the small area with the native light turret and infantry and collect the free soldier power-up. Return to base to fix your Wraith if needed. Follow the snow passage to the east of your citadel base. Take every right hand turn possible, ignoring all native opponents, and arrive at the unoccupied citadel platform at the southeast corner of the map. Claim the citadel, place SAM sites and ground turrets, and wait for your citadel turret to come online. Once online, jump to citadel HUD view and use your heavy turret to destroy all native generator buildings that are in range. Purchase energy and tank buildings.

Once you have cleared the area, follow the road north to the third unoccupied citadel. It is strongly recommended that you purchase two bomber buildings at this juncture. This is an excellent central location from which to send bombers and is an important key to defeating the map. Place SAM sites, and when your citadel comes online, destroy the AAV generator building from the citadel HUD view. Once you have secured these three citadels, head back to the southeast corner of the map, and retrieve the free bomber power-up hidden in the small enclosure.

Head north from here back toward your third citadel. From there, travel north, destroy the native infantry generator, and make your way northwest. As the path narrows, you will see a heavy turret and two native bomber buildings looming in the distance. Take all three out with your bombers and infantry. Once they are destroyed, continue north, follow the narrow, winding passage to the northwest, eliminate the infantry and collect the weapon power-up. At this point, turn around and head back the way you came. Take the first passage on the right, and from a distance, destroy the heavy turret with your bombers. Enter the large area, take a right turn, and destroy all AAVs with your guided missiles. Continue heading north, and destroy all native generator buildings on the opposite side of the small hill with your bombers. Try to avoid being detected by the distant Imperial citadel turret. Once you have cleared all enemy threats, send repeated waves of bombers at the northern Imperial citadel. Take out Imperial SAM sites before the bomber reaches its target. Send in waves of infantry to complete the job. Finish off the Imperial production buildings with max lasers, claim the citadel, and set up SAM sites and ground turrets. Purchase boosted buildings when possible.

After securing the area, follow the road southwest and eliminate the native infantry generator. Proceed to the south and destroy the citadel with bombers and infantry. By this time, you should have enough resources to knock this citadel out fairly easily. Once you have claimed the citadel, get ready for a series of retaliatory attacks. Once your citadel has come online, go to citadel HUD view and destroy the AAV generator to the south of the citadel base.

From here head north, and take your first left. Use bombers and infantry to take out all native buildings. Use tanks to destroy all ground troops. As you make your way to the center of the large area, you will begin to hear a rumble overhead. Clear out of the way, and be sure to dodge multiple bomber payloads. Continue to eliminate all native buildings systematically. If you don't, they will be a menace to you later. Watch out for the two heavy turrets that teleport in as you approach the final Imperial citadel. Also, watch out for crossfire from the native heavy turrets to the left. After destroying all threats with bombers and infantry, turn your focus on the Imperial citadel. Send in everything that you have and demolish it with a vengeance. After you have destroyed the production buildings, switch to your guided missiles, and call in the citadel. Watch out for sudden AAV teleportations that will attempt to destroy your citadel in transit. Once you have successfully called in your final citadel, set up AAV defenses, and wait for it to come online. Your mission is complete.

Be sure to immediately return to your citadels if they have been hit by an Imperial KSAT attack.

Nilfheim

Claim the unoccupied citadel directly in front of you when the mission begins. Place two turrets close to the

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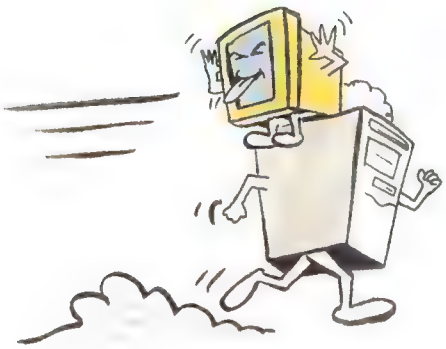

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grass mound in front of the citadel and a SAM site further back. Build an energy building and an infantry building.

Take out the tank generator building through the corridor. Call in some infantry to help you with this. Note: Avoid being hit by the heavy turret fire in this area.

Clear the two light turrets around the citadel to the immediate east. Then call in some soldiers to take out the heavy turret. Note: You can assist them by distracting the heavy turret while the soldiers place their satchel charges.

When the turrets are clear in the area, claim the citadel and build an infantry building and an infantry booster building.

Check your initial citadel for bomber damage and build two SAM sites on the rear east side of your citadel, then build a turret in front of the citadel.

Now you want to clear the enemy buildings around the citadel that is located in the middle of the east side of the map. This citadel is important because it has an energy lode of 10,000 — enough to support your war effort for the rest of the mission. This is a good place to use some of your special weapons. Your boosted soldiers should be very effective now at taking out the buildings as long as you remove any threat that a rabble unit may pose to them.

When all enemy buildings are cleared, claim the citadel and build an energy building. Place a SAM site and two turrets in strategic locations.

When the citadel comes online, use it to destroy the bomber building behind this citadel, then rush to claim the citadel at the southeast corner of the map.

After you have claimed this citadel, build an energy building and a bomber building. Build a SAM site to the north of the citadel and two turrets just to the south.

When the citadel comes online, jump to your citadel view and destroy the enemy units approaching the citadel, then move on to the generator buildings just beyond the fog line. At this point you will probably have lost one of your citadels to a KSAT beam. Move your Wraith to the citadel area and clear all attacking Imperium units, then reclaim the citadel.

Now go to the overhead map view and examine all your citadels. Fix all damaged buildings, then make sure you have at least one infantry building, one infantry booster building, one bomber building, and one AAV building. You may have to clear another building to fit the AAV building. Check your citadels to find out if you have any with energy buildings that aren't drawing any more energy. If you find a citadel that has a superfluous energy building, sell it and replace it with a unit production building.

Now there should not be any open citadels available on the map. So now you must begin to force your might upon the Imperium owned northern territory. The next citadel you take will be your hardest for the entire mission. Before you move on, you must ensure that the citadels that you currently own are well defended against enemy attack. Skip through all your owned citadels using the F12 key making sure they have a full compliment of turrets and units all the way up to the unit maximums for the area. During this time, you may be KSAT beamed again or an Imperium force may assault you. Calmly eliminate all units and rebuild your citadels and forces.

You will now begin the assault on the Imperium-owned citadel in the northeastern part of the map. Begin by destroying the light turrets that can be seen on the cliff edge from the river. Then destroy the two heavy turrets on the eastern side of the citadel. You may need to go back to one of your citadels to heal at this point. You will also want to keep a close eye on which citadels may have taken a KSAT hit. Unless you are about to take over the citadel you are currently at, always run back to the citadel and defend it.

There is one last thing you should do before you begin the full assault on the citadel — remove the tank generator building lodged into the side of the mountain to the west of the citadel. Use a bomber and infantry to take out the building. Use an AAV to distract the Imperium AAVs and the citadel turret.

When you've taken out the tank generator building you can proceed to assault the citadel. Remember to keep as many AAVs in the air as possible. They're wonderful distractions for other AAVs and turrets. Whenever you have a new infantry unit ready, throw it at the citadel. For that matter, whenever you have any unit ready, throw it at the citadel. When the citadel tower is destroyed, press the C-button until your power triangle cycles to the weapons setting. Now clear the remainder of the Imperium buildings and *do not* let any Imperium units into the claim square. As soon as the citadel platform is clear of all buildings, claim the citadel and call in other buildings. This prevents the Imperium units from destroying the falling citadel tower, then quickly claiming another of their own. Now immediately repair your Wraith and build turrets and SAM sites.

The rest of the map is a clean-up as long as you maintain control of your citadels. The easiest way to do that is to take out the Imperium's KSAT building as quickly as possible.

Take out the tank generator building and avoid being hit by heavy turret fire in this area.

ADDITIONAL HINTS

NILFHEIM

- There is an energy power-up on the ledge that wraps around the mountain by the river to the north of your initial citadel. Grab it if you find yourself short of resources.
- You can target some units and buildings across the river from the citadel in the middle of the southern half of the map.
- You can target a heavy turret from the citadel in the southeast corner of the map.
- Enemy ground units will not follow you across water.

There is an energy power-up on the ledge that wraps around the mount by the river to the north of your initial Citadel.

Ghorvati

It is recommended that you upgrade your bombers on the technology screen before tackling Ghorvati. Another worthy investment is portable health.

Travel north from your starting location. Troops will be called in automatically to assist you in securing the first citadel. Travel up the hill to the citadel base, claim the citadel, and immediately set up SAM sites on the northeast side of the citadel turret to take care of AAV retaliatory strike. Purchase a power building, and an infantry building, and make your way down the hill towards the second citadel base.

You will need to take care of the heavy turret with your ground troops. Once you have destroyed the heavy turret, claim the second citadel, and purchase at least one bomber building. Place SAM sites and light turrets near the native infantry generator to take care of native soldiers running toward your

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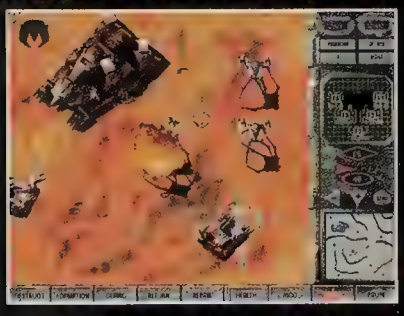

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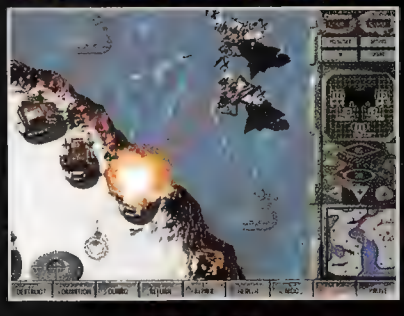

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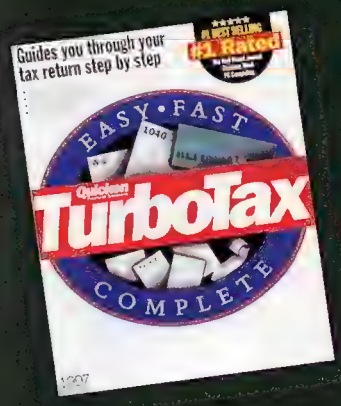

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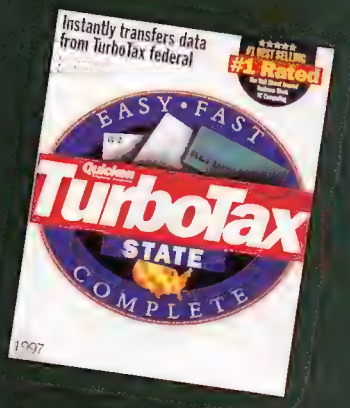

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citadel base. Once online, your citadel turret will destroy the native infantry generator. Beware of a tank assault coming from the ravine to the northwest.

After securing the area, head northwest up the desert ravine. As you exit the ravine, beware of surprise AAV attacks. Once you have destroyed the AAVs, look out on the giant valley. To the right, you will see an Imperial citadel looming in the distance. Directly below the citadel, you will see a native infantry generator. Send bombers to destroy the native infantry generator. It is important to take care of this, or you will pay for it later on when you attempt to claim the Imperial citadel.

After using bombers to take care of the native infantry generator, turn around and head back toward the ravine. Right before you reach the entrance to the ravine, turn left and head down the passage. You will have to destroy a lone native tank, but this area will provide you with shielding as you approach the Imperial citadel.

At the end of the passage, attack the citadel repeatedly with waves of infantry and bombers. Once you have knocked out the citadel tower and production buildings, claim the citadel, and purchase whatever upgrades you need. It is strongly recommended that you own one tank building to face upcoming battles. You will receive a message that the gate locking mechanisms are deactivated.

After securing the area, head northeast through the gated entrance and up the desert ravine. Beware of surprise attacks from behind you.

At the top of the ravine, you will have an almost aerial view of the citadel below. Call in bombers and infantry on the unsuspecting citadel. Charge down the cliff to finish off the job. If you get in trouble and need to repair yourself at the previous citadel, you will find a secret passage on the northwest side of the area.

After claiming the citadel, be prepared for a large counter attack. Call in as many of your troops as possible

Beware of surprise attacks coming from the ravine to the northwest.

because the hills will soon be swarming with enemies.

After securing the area, buy more production buildings, and head toward the gate on the south side of the area. The gate will drop, and you will have gained access to the final area of the map: the Imperial Starport.

As you enter the starport, you will receive a transmission from central command that an allied bomber strike is on the way. This bomber strike will assist you in destroying the final area, but only if you first destroy all of the Imperium's anti-air fortifications. Quickly destroy all Native SAM sites as the countdown begins, and then call in a bomber strike on the Native AAV generator just below the citadel platform. Soon your allied bombers will be overhead and will drop payloads on the Imperial citadel platform. Try not to get hit by the bombs. After the citadel turret, there is still work to be done, and little time to do it. Quickly head up one of the ramps toward the citadel base, and destroy all Native heavy turrets. If you run low on health, go to the south side of the citadel base and travel down one of the ramps. There will be a health kit located on the southeast corner. Destroy all production buildings and claim the citadel, and your mission is a success.

Deactivate the gate locking mechanisms by taking over the Imperial Citadel.

Sahara

The key to beating Sahara is to move quickly, carefully defend your citadels, and use your resources wisely. The Imperium is relentless, and will quickly take citadels from you if you are not careful. It is recommended that you purchase the anti-matter disk before taking on this map.

After establishing the first citadel in the southwestern corner, quickly lay SAM sites and light turret defenses around the perimeter. Purchase an energy building, and at least one infantry building, and then proceed quickly to the east to the second citadel bunker on the small hill. Ignore all enemy ground units en route.

Once at the citadel, lay waste to the native infantry generator directly to the north of the citadel, destroy all enemy tanks that might shoot your citadel-in-transit down, and then claim the citadel. Quickly purchase at least one bomber facility. Another infantry building is recommended. Establish at least one SAM site directly to the north of the citadel tower, and place light turrets.

Proceed to the northeast. Defeat the first infantry building, shoot down any menacing AAV gunships, and travel to

The key to beating Sahara is to move quickly, carefully defend your citadels, and use your resources wisely.

the top of the hill. Destroy the native infantry generator on the other side of the hill. Return to your southern citadel for health if needed.

Once you have destroyed the infantry generator at the top of the hill, use your bombers and waves of infantry to take out the citadel turret. Remember to clear the area of Imperial SAM sites before your bombers reach the area. Use your anti-matter disks now if you have them. Taking this citadel is an important turning point in the battle for Sahara. Continue to call in infantry and lay waste to all opposing forces in the area. After destroying the citadel tower, destroy the Imperium production buildings with your max lasers. Be sure to claim the citadel before Imperial AAVs return to reclaim the citadel. You should have about thirty seconds after you drop the Imperium citadel tower.

At this point, you will strategically swap buildings to provide a more direct route for your bomber attacks. Sell your bomber building at the southern citadel and purchase another energy building in its place. At the eastern citadel, purchase two bomber buildings. Lay perimeter defenses, and check the status of your other citadels. Repair as needed.

Proceed northwest. On the right side of the ravine you will notice a few palm trees blocking the entrance to a small enclosure. Enter cautiously, as the enemy has a surprise for you as you enter the area. Destroy all opposition, and take out the two hidden bomber buildings. You'll be glad you did later. Return from the direction that you came. Take a right. Defeat all tanks en route. Once you reach the narrow grassy passageway, send in a few waves of infantry to defeat the native infantry generator. You might need to destroy the Imperial minefield with your lasers. Once cleared, call in bombers and infantry attacks on the citadel tower. As you strafe to dodge the citadel turret's laser blasts, watch for more mines. Also, beware of the Native Heavy Turret to the north of the Imperium tower. Its fire inflicts massive damage. Once you have defeated the tower and all production buildings, claim the citadel and quickly lay a SAM site directly to the south of your citadel tower. Purchase boosted buildings when possible. If you have any energy building on sites with no remaining energy lodes, sell them and purchase more buildings. Lay ground turrets and proceed west.

Once you enter the next area, take care of enemy tanks. Use guided missiles to take care of any AAV threats. Sneak up the right wall, and use bombers and infantry to blow away the citadel tower. Use max lasers to clear the production buildings. When cleared, claim the citadel, and purchase more upgrades, energy buildings, and boosted buildings where possible. Keep on guard because in a few seconds you will receive a message of a large bomber strike heading towards one of your citadels. The message will also include the targeted citadel's map coordinates, so immediately access your overhead map, locate the citadel, and double click on the citadel's icon. This will place you inside the citadel's tower. Immediately place SAM sites on the side of the tower nearest the center of the map. Then look to the sky, and begin picking the bombers off as they come.

Once you have defended against the bomber attack, return to your Wraith and head south from the northwest citadel. As you enter the narrow passage along the west wall look for an opening on the right just before the infantry generator. As you enter you will see three unattended power-up boxes. Grab them quickly and escape the room as quickly as possible. Try not to become disoriented from the ambush.

As you exit the enclosure, take a left and then take your first right. This will take you into the center of the map, and to the Imperium's final citadel. As you enter, use your guided missiles to take out AAVs. Take out the heavy turrets one by one. Slowly make your way toward the citadel tower, and throw everything that you have at it. Try not to strafe around the other sides of the citadel base or you will be pelted by a variety of other enemies that will track you all over the area. Once you have destroyed the citadel and its production buildings, claim it and defend it while it prepares to go online. Once online, you will receive a mission-accomplished message and you are ready to take on the next planet. (In order to defeat the level, you must own and have a tower on all of the citadels. If you have lost a citadel at any point during the mission, reclaim it to complete the mission.)

PCG

To prepare your troops for the large bomber strike, you need to upgrade as many units and buildings as your power supply will allow.

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Seven Kingdoms

Want to be master of your domain? Read on!

Oh, faithful readers, have we got a treat for you. These tips on surviving and beating *Seven Kingdoms* come straight from the game's publisher, Interactive Magic. You're about to build your best kingdom yet!

Move your cursor over an enemy group to see who's in charge; if a general is present, he'll have a star over his head. Concentrate your troops on him, and you'll deprive the enemy of the bonuses he provides.

The most important thing to understand about *Seven Kingdoms* is that the units in this game are quite different from those in most real-time strategy games. They are, in a way, more "human;" they have wants and needs and a hundred different skill levels. They're not like the tanks or soldiers of other real-time strategy games — you can't just use 'em, abuse 'em, and build more. You've got to find good people, nurture them, put them to useful work, then do your best to ensure that your best and brightest troops don't get themselves seriously injured or killed.

Training Instead of Recruiting

At the very beginning of the game, you'll need to form a troop of eight soldiers and put them into training under your king. A good idea here is not to simply recruit (conscript) eight peasants into military service, but instead to train them in the skill of leadership. This has several advantages: you'll avoid the drop in village loyalty that you always experience when you recruit peasants, and — more importantly — your soldiers will begin with twice the fighting skill and leadership ability of recruited soldiers.

Generals

You can't overestimate the importance of having an extensive supply of generals with high leadership levels. These generals will more quickly raise their soldiers' fighting skills, and when they're present in battle, they'll give a great boost to the combat effectiveness of your troops.

Don't leave good generals alone in their forts. With troops to train, a general's leadership level and loyalty level will steadily increase. If you don't give your generals a full compliment of troops, you'll be wasting a valuable resource.

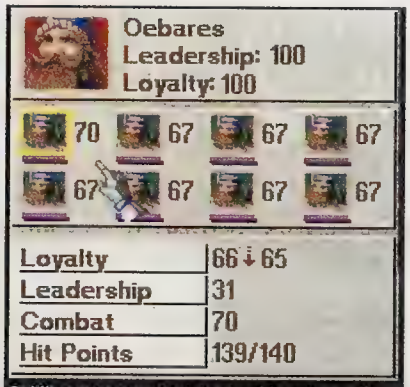
Because generals are so important, it's a good idea to relieve your enemy of their brass. When in battle, passing your cursor over enemy formations will reveal which of them is in charge; generals have a star icon over their heads (as opposed to the sword icons of common soldiers). When you have an enemy general in your sights, target him with all of your troops in the area.

It's also smart to stay on top of the loyalty levels of your generals; if their loyalty to you falls too low, they'll become easy targets for foreign spies. If you do find a general whose loyalty is low, you can get him smiling again by giving him a chest full of medals. To do this, repeatedly click on the Honors Tile until your General's loyalty level reaches 100.

Promoting from Within

A small percentage of your soldiers will have inborn leadership abilities. Taking advantage of these abilities can be a key to success in *Seven Kingdoms*. How do you find these natural-born leaders? When a troop is in its fort, click on the soldier at the top, left-hand position. It's in this position that you'll find the soldier who has the highest leadership level in the troop. You won't always find a natural leader here, but if you have one in the troop, he'll always be in this position.

When you've found a soldier who's officer material, right-click on his picture, and he'll exit the fort. Clicking on the Star Tile will promote him to general. Now you've got to set him up in a fort of his own and assign him a new batch of common soldiers to train, in turn increasing his own leadership abilities.



Soldiers who have high leadership values will make the best generals. Once they're promoted, set 'em up with a fort and some soldiers to train.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries are hired at inns, so it's a good idea to build two or three widely-spaced inns at the start of the game. In the beginning, you'll find a good number of independents passing through your region; if you have the money, you should pick up those who can help you the most.

In the inns, you'll find people of all races, giving you the opportunity to build a varied empire. At the beginning of the game, though, the only types you should be hiring are generals and spies.

You'll be able to make use of these generals to win control of independent villages that share the generals' nationalities. Search out the independent villages near you, note their nationality, then search for good mercenary leaders who could help you to absorb those villages.

Once your inns are built, a quick way of viewing the available mercenaries is to click on one of the inns, then press your left- or right-arrow keys on your keyboard. This will cycle you through the inns one at a time.

You can use this same technique for other building types; select any building, then press the side arrow keys to center your screen on your next building of that type. If you want to view the selected type

of buildings belonging to other kingdoms, press the up or down arrow keys.

Most newly-hired mercenaries who don't share your king's nationality will have a low loyalty level. You should immediately raise their level by awarding them honors.

Espionage

Espionage is one of the coolest aspects of *Seven Kingdoms*. With patience and care, you can build up an extensive network of spies who can sow dissent, sabotage, bribe, capture, and assassinate.

At the very beginning of the game, you should send spies into as many independent villages as you can, (making sure your spies share the nationality of the villagers). Once infiltrated, they'll have time to increase their spying skills while in the "sleeping" mode. If, in the future, you're trying to absorb one of these independent villages, you can activate this sleeper agent by putting him into "sow dissent" mode, which will help to speed up the process of absorption.

If another kingdom takes over an independent village where your spies are sleeping, they'll be in good position to be drafted into the service of your enemy, where they can work to your advantage. If one of your spies has been drafted into an opponent's military, use him to bribe an enemy general. If you have the money, don't worry about the cost; with enemy generals under your control, you'll have an important ace up your sleeve. At any time, you can use your secretly controlled generals to either capture the enemy's forts and the soldiers under them or — if they're in the field — to turn the entire troop over to your control.

If one of the generals you've turned has a high leadership level, it may be a good decision not to change colors and reveal yourself. It might be better to leave him in position, in case the enemy's king is slain in battle. Your turned general may actually become the enemy's next king and turn the whole empire over to you.

When you're selecting enemy units to bribe, it's a good idea to choose those with the lowest loyalty to their king; their allegiance can be bought with less cash. Remember that the higher the skill level of your spy, the more likely his bribe will be accepted. If you have more than one spy in the building where you're offering a bribe, you'll be asked to choose the spy who will make the offer. Choosing the spy with the greatest skill will give you the best chance of success — but it'll also open your most valuable spy to the possibility of exposure and execution.

If you want to sneak one of your spies into the enemy's ranks without the enemy getting suspicious, it may be wise to change his cloak's color to independent white. While he's in that cloak, place him near an independent village, toggle on the Surrender Tile, then change your spy's cloak to the enemy's color. When you follow this procedure, your enemy will be notified that an independent villager has joined his kingdom, rather than being told that a member of another kingdom has suddenly defected to his side.

Reputation

If yours is a small, weak kingdom, and you want it to survive to become a big and powerful empire, it's vital that you build and keep a good reputation. A high reputation will not only make it easier to control your people and to absorb independent villages; it'll make it less likely that other kingdoms will screw you around. Launching a sneak attack against (or breaking a treaty with) a high-reputation kingdom will severely lower the reputation of the transgressing kingdom.

Forming alliances with high-rep kingdoms is also a good idea; if you posses a high rep yourself, those kingdoms will be unlikely to break their treaty with you out of fear of damaging their good names.

Keep track of the reputations of your friends and foes under the Kingdoms Scroll (F1). If another kingdom has a very low or a negative reputation (#), you can do whatever you want to them — apart from killing their civilians, which will always hurt your rep.

Trade, Population, and Taxes

There are three things to remember if you want to build a healthy economy: trade, trade, and trade. Even a kingdom with no access to natural resources will prosper if it establishes a good trade network.

A large population gives you a huge economic boost, since it provides a large tax base and generates a high demand for goods. It'll be tough to get a large population, though, if you don't set your villagers up with a good standard of living. You do this by making sure they have jobs and access to well-stocked markets.

Special taxes can also give your treasury a boost. Right-clicking on the Tax Tile will pop up a menu where you can set a loyalty level at which taxes will automatically be collected.

When you build a market, try to place it so that it is linked to as many villages as possible, as well as to your factories and mines, if you have 'em. If you're settling new villages near your old ones, make sure they're placed within linking distance of your existing markets.

You can build an effective espionage system by sending "sleeper" agents into as many independent villages as you can at the very start of the game.

Even without access to natural resources, a kingdom can thrive with a good trade network.

Independent Villages

It's best not to waste your time trying to take independent villages that contain two or more nationalities of more or less equal numbers. It's very tough and shouldn't be attempted unless you've already absorbed the easier, single-culture villages.

The best way to absorb independent villages is to first build a fort linked to the village, then put it under your king or a general who has a high leadership level. It's very important to make sure your general is of the same nationality as the villagers — but that, by itself, may not be enough to sway the villagers to your side. To help encourage them to join you, you should build a market, a factory, and a tower of science or two, making sure they're all linked to the village. This will give goods and jobs to the villagers and help them to see that yours is one swingin' empire. Of course, you have to make sure your market is stocked with goods and your factory has raw materials coming into it.

If you're tired of waiting for the capitulation of an independent village, attacking it is not at all out of the question. Just wait until their resistance is low before you do, or you'll risk killing an unacceptable number of villagers, thereby rendering them unfit for useful labor.

Battling Fryhtans

If you see another player engaged in battle with a horde of Fryhtans, it can be a good idea to sneak yourself into the fray. You'll have a good chance of picking up treasure or a scroll of power while the other player absorbs the most damage.

Clicking on the Fryhtans one at a time will reveal the All High Fryhtan and the Ordo. The All Highs hold the Scrolls of Power; the Ordos have the treasure. Try to target and kill one of them, then swoop one of your men in to pick up the goodies.

Seats of Power

Every seat of power will need to have one general or the king placed in charge of leading the prayers. The leadership level of this commander will influence the speed at which the Greater Beings can be invoked, so it's very important that you put a good man in charge.

PCG

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Readers' Requests

Having trouble reaching the final levels in *G-Police*? Then check out our level cheat codes. Need help with *Wing Commander Prophecy* and *Heavy Gear*? The Strategy Central crew has some useful hints and tips to give you, courtesy of some of the finest readers a magazine could ever hope to have. Now before we start to weep openly, we'd better get on with the show.

There are many weapons at your disposal in *Wing Commander Prophecy*. These swarmers will make short work of some of the weaker ships. For more tips on the weapons, check out the strategy below!

Wing Commander Prophecy

After completing the wonderful Origin game *Wing Commander Prophecy* (twice), I put these tips together. Hope this helps all the other pilots out there...

Bombing Tips

Before you start attacking any capital ship, first make sure that no fighters are attempting to attack you. Check this by cycling through the targets and looking at the ship orientation VDU to see if any are heading directly toward you.

One of the first things you need to do when bombing is to take out the shield emitters. These are medium-sized, thin projections, usually near the bridge or between the bridge and the engines. The most effective weapon for doing this is the stormfire cannon, which is available on both bombers. When making your run on the emitters, don't pass them. Cut your throttle to zero if necessary. Next is the bridge. The best way to take this out is to fly up so that the top of the capital ship is behind you. While you are flying away, switch to your rear turret, and shoot the enemy gun turrets. When the turrets are out of your range, go back to the cockpit and turn back towards the ship. Switch the active missile to the heavy "firestorm" torpedo, and target the bridge. Get as close as you can without getting in range of its guns, and attempt to lock and launch a torpedo. If you need to be inside the enemy's range to lock a torpedo, accelerate to full speed, and get as close as possible. Sometimes you can be almost touching its hull, and the guns will be unable to hit you.

Depending on the ship, two or three torpedoes should destroy the bridge. The other component you must destroy is the engine. This is the easiest part to destroy because of the shape of the enemy capital ships. It is really easy for you to fly directly behind the flat engine, out of range of the gun turrets. Because of the safety of this tactic, you can use three or four light torpedoes to finish the job.

READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

Enemy Ship Tips

MANTA
Easy to destroy when tailed, they have a strong attack, so don't fly head-on. Use your afterburners to keep up with them when they run. If you break off, they will come back to attack you.

SKATE
Starts off as three ships hooked together. Once destroyed, it breaks into three separate ships. On defensive missions, watch for the class T Skates. If they are headed towards the Midway, they are attempting to launch torpedoes. Once they are split into three parts, they can no longer launch torpedoes.

STINGRAY
When three Stingrays combine, they will have a rapid-fire plasma cannon. The best strategy here is to tail the joined Stingrays closely, and pound away with guns only. This will not only split the three, but many times will destroy one or even two of them. To use this to your advantage, if three Stingrays are attempting to join, let them, because you can then do more damage.

DEVIL RAY
These ships have very high speed, and a rapid rate of turn. Their main weakness is their tendency to stop when they turn. When they stop, fire up to five Dragonfly

Cheater's Corner

G-POLICE

As beautiful as *G-Police* is to look at, some of the missions can be a real challenge to get through. Type these codes at the MAIN MENU to access any of the levels.

LEVEL 1	MADGAV
LEVEL 2	DOLMAN
LEVEL 3	SONAGAV
LEVEL 4	ACEDUF
LEVEL 5	JOJOGUN
LEVEL 6	WENSKI
LEVEL 7	SAEGGY
LEVEL 8	MAZMAN
LEVEL 9	DAZMAN
LEVEL 10	DELUCS
LEVEL 11	ANDOOOO
LEVEL 12	KIMBCHS
LEVEL 13	ANDYMAC
LEVEL 14	YERMAN
LEVEL 15	OLLIEB
LEVEL 16	THEYOLK
LEVEL 17	TONYMASH
LEVEL 18	ANDYCROW
LEVEL 19	BIONIC
LEVEL 20	TSLATER
LEVEL 21	AINTHOD
LEVEL 22	JONRITZ
LEVEL 23	CLAIREC
LEVEL 24	STEVEBOT
LEVEL 25	ANGUSF
LEVEL 26	EUANLEC
LEVEL 27	EDFIRE
LEVEL 28	STUBOMB
LEVEL 29	THONBOY
LEVEL 30	JIMMAC
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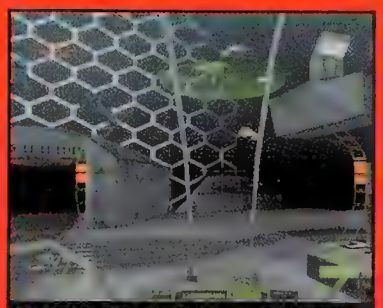

Avoid frustration and experience the full range of *G-Police*'s eye-candy-filled levels with these cheat codes.

missiles at them or one Speculum IR missile (advanced if available), then use your guns. This will eventually wear down the front armor. You should still shoot it as much as possible when you are tailing it, or when it is circling you. Don't use Heat Seekers, because they will almost always miss against them.

SQUID
This ship is only used as defense for enemy cap ships. This ship will attack head on, circle a bit, then speed away, far out of range. Shoot them as much as possible when they are coming at you, then attempt to follow them. Try to shoot a heat seeker when they run. When they make another pass at you, shoot as many Dragonflies at them as possible. Rinse, lather, repeat.

BARRACUDA
Very maneuverable, so wait until they are occupied with another target before attacking. Use Dragonflies or Dumbfires if available, then finish them off with guns.

— Arrghman, *via the Internet*

Thank you for those excellent tips, Arrghman. For your efforts in keeping other fighter pilots from becoming space chowder, we are awarding you the beyond-coveted Reader's Tip of the Month Award. Look for a box full of Gaming Goodness to land on your doorstep real soon! (Um...er... as soon as we figure out your real name, that is.)

Heavy Gear

Here are some tactics I used to complete Activision's *Heavy Gear*:

Movement is the key to success. The first move in every mission should be to engage your wheels. Keep them engaged while fighting, and employ the "twist and circle" method of combat (e.g. keep twisting your torso while circling your target). Remember that you turn faster when your speed is low, so when preparing to turn, always lower your speed. Crouching should only be used to pick up weapons, and *only* when you have already used up the ammo of your current weapons.

Always use the heaviest Gear possible so that you can carry the most weapons. The weapon of choice should be the Snub Cannon. If you hit the head, torso, or engine of any Gear using this weapon you are guaranteed a one shot kill. The only downside to the Snub Cannon is the limited number of shots (12). The best tactic for using this weapon against stationary Gears is to stop 250 to 300 meters from your target, zoom in, and aim for the torso. At this distance, the pilots will not attack you. Against moving Gears, slow to half your speed and angle towards the enemy. When you are sure of your shot, take it, but don't slow down or stop to turn and face him.

Squad mates provide needed firepower, but more importantly, give the enemy another target to shoot for besides you! Be wary though, as your mates have a little problem with their aim and might plant a Snub Cannon shot in your back if you're not careful. The best strategy when dealing with squad mates is to immediately instruct them to attack the targets you select, rather than wasting time by flanking or surveying the target.

— Jason A. Bentley, Lyndonville, NY

Thanks, Jason — we couldn't have said it better ourselves!

PCG

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Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

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"Abduct this computer"

-BOOT Magazine, September, 1997

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-Voodoo Extreme, January, 1998

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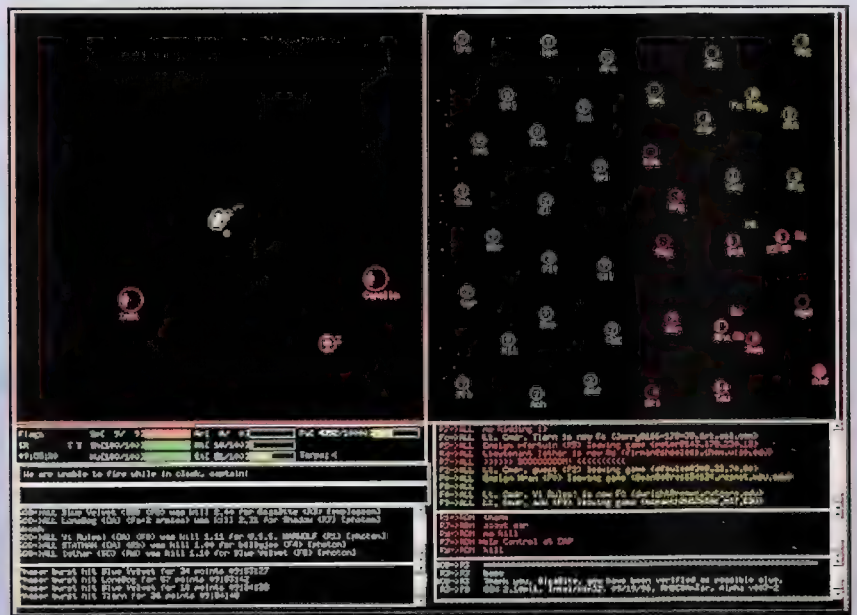


Did our online gaming feature overlook your favorite game, maybe something like *Netrek*, pictured above? Then send us a letter and tell us how stupid we are. We love when people do that.

On the Line

Although I generally agree with you guys, I'm afraid you made a terrible mistake in naming the best Internet games out there (February 1998 issue). You completely forgot the Granddaddy (and reigning champion) of them all: *Netrek*. For those people that don't know, *Netrek* is a graphic multi-player Internet game that is loosely based on a 1960s TV show where they flew around in a spaceship. Even though *Netrek* is not as flashy as some games, it has two things that are a hell of a lot more important: fun and character. This game can be traced back to its predecessors in the 1970s. Its various incarnations have been around longer than any 20 other online games combined, and its mark in the world of online gaming is undeniable. It's simply a classic. Oh, by the way, it is and always will be free, which makes it even better.

—Joe Darden, *via the Internet*

Thrashing Thresh

This is in response to John Romero's letter about how it's such a great idea having Dennis Fong write a 3D gaming column for *PC Gamer*. I have to disagree. Just because the guy wins some multi-player contests does not give him the privilege to write for a major magazine. Do you chose your column writers based on their gaming ability or their writing ability? Playing games has nothing to do with how good a writer you are. I found Mr. Fong's articles to be poorly written, and I think you should give the guy his pink slip.

—Jehan Jaleel,
via the Internet

Not everyone loves *Quake* champion Dennis "Thresh" Fong. But just look at him — he's such a nice boy!

Gross Profits, Part 2

I'm so glad you printed Rick Hale's opinion of gory game ads! I've felt the same way for over a year now. It's been unnerving to flip through some of the ads game publishers put out — often I'm more disturbed by their ads than I am their games. And because *PCG*'s such an excellent magazine, you get more ads than all other game rags.

The thing is that not only are some of these ads disturbing, their slogans are also patronizing. They try to challenge you and tease you, but some do it with taunts and insults that make you feel like you're being picked on by a seventh-grade bully. A friend was flipping through a recent issue and caught that two-page ad for *Of Light and Darkness*, with the woman in sea-shell-like garb leaning back. The slogan states "There are 7 deadly sins in the world...you are committing one of them right now" — to which my friend responded, "Oops, I didn't know that looking at bad 1990s pop-art is a deadly sin."

Anyway, I think you get the point. Just wanted to thank you again for publishing Rick's opinion, because there's certainly more than one person out there who feels that way — just not so radically.

— Don Christian Markham,
via the Internet

I just received the February 1998 issue of your magazine and enjoyed the articles very much. However, after reading Rick Hale's letter to the editor ("Gross Profits") about some of the disturbing advertisements in your magazine, I felt obliged to comment.

I too have been very alarmed by the some of the graphic and disgusting ads that have recently graced the pages of your otherwise excellent magazine. In particular, I was revolted

by recent ads for the games *Sin*, *Flesh Feast*, and *Resident Evil*, which depict, among other things, bloody chain saws and severed limbs.

I understand that advertisements such as this form a good percentage of your profits, and that as a reader I must exercise my own discretion in what I read. However, would it be asking too much for you to exercise a little bit of restraint on behalf of the vast majority of your readers who do not want to see images of disgusting violence and gore interspersed between your game reviews and articles? I do not object to games being violent or graphic — if a game offends me, I will not buy it. I do, however, object to being forced to look at nauseating ads while paging through your magazine.

Please re-examine your advertising policy and stop running ads that are clearly beyond the limits of good taste. I find your magazine to be the most entertaining and interesting computer gaming magazine in existence, and I would hate to move to a different magazine, but I will do so if I keep running across disturbing ads in *PC Gamer*.

— John A. Rau, *via the Internet*

What's the deal with John Romero's latest advertisement for *Daikatana*? He's about to make me his bitch? I don't *think* so! This ad is so sexually suggestive — why doesn't he just say he wants us to perform oral sex on him? I didn't know you could trademark the words "Suck It Down." Does that mean I'll be violating Ion Storm's trademark when I tell my wife to "suck it down" while we're making love?

Daikatana better be one hell of a bad-ass game. Otherwise, gamers may be telling John what *he* can suck. But even if *Daikatana* is beyond excellent, you can tell John not to expect me to be going down on him.

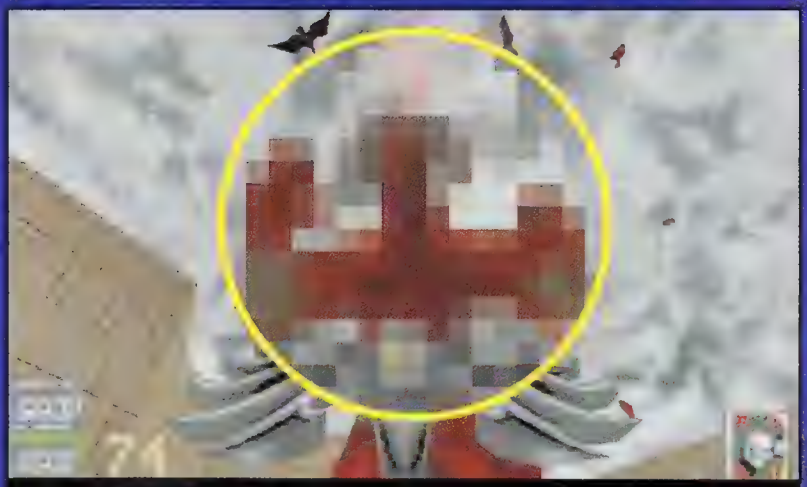
— Rodger Ellison, *Philadelphia, PA*

PCG

The ad for John Romero's *Daikatana*: just what do they want us to suck down?

READERS RESPOND

to Printing a screenshot of the final boss in *Hexen II*



Maybe we did go too far in printing the screenshot of Eidolon in our *Hexen II* review. We received many suggestions about what to do with screenshots from the finales of games; in the end, we decided to save pictures such as this one for the strategy pages.

What you did by publishing the final boss in the review is like telling who the killer is in the movie *Scream 2*.

— David, *via the Internet*

I think it is a bad idea to show the finale in the review, but it's okay to put it in the strategy section when you cover it there.

— Jerome Moore, *via the Internet*

This entire issue was blown entirely out of proportion. It's just a boss, it's not like detail was presented on how the ending went or how to beat him — besides, the reason you go through hours upon hours of shooting and beating things to death is for the challenge of it, not because of a single boss. It doesn't ruin the game at all, and I'm sure most gamers will agree that *Hexen II*'s Eidolon is cool enough to merit a place of honor in the review.

— Lee Painton, *via the Internet*

I disagree with the letter you ran about *Hexen II*. If you can't show the final boss, what should you show? I think you should continue to place pictures of bosses in your magazine.

— Andrew Ellis, *via the Internet*

It's not right to have a picture of a game's final boss in your review. However, having it in Strategy Central is acceptable.

— Prapong Klysubun, *via the Internet*

In your Feb. 98 issue, you posed the question of whether or not your magazine should reveal the final screenshots of new games.

I understand the tension of some gamers to shoot, fight, crawl, jump, blast, and destroy their way through games in order to reach the final part of a game. However, there are such gamers as myself who do not quite have the stuff to make it through the game. Either my fingers are too damned slow or I haven't quite yet evolved from the *Pong* game I first owned, but much of the time, I never make it to the end.

Occasionally, your wonderful magazine grants me the cheats and, cowardly, I type them in to reach the big boss level. However, much of the time, I just play until I reach a point and then move on to the next best thing on the game shelf. Thus, without your magazine showing the end shots and the big, bad bosses, I would miss out on much of the surprises the game designers had in store.

I really, really enjoy seeing your previews of games, including pictures of things to come, and then rushing out and trying to reach that point. And if I never reach that point? At least I know what I'm missing!

— Steven Blackman, *via the Internet*

Yes, you did go too far in printing the final monster in *Hexen II*.

— Dave Barron, *via the Internet*

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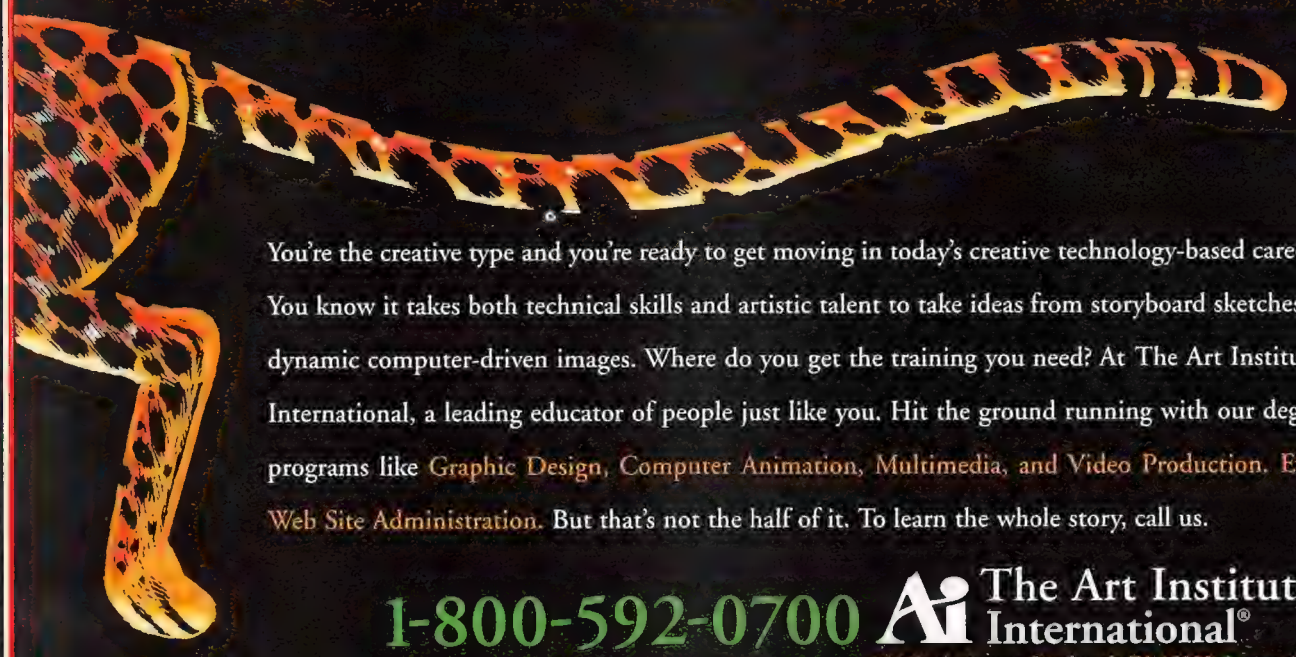

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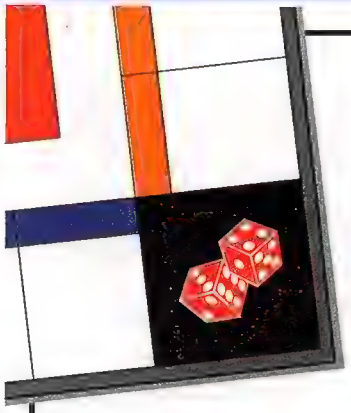

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Terrell Davis lifts Denver to Super Bowl glory. (AP)
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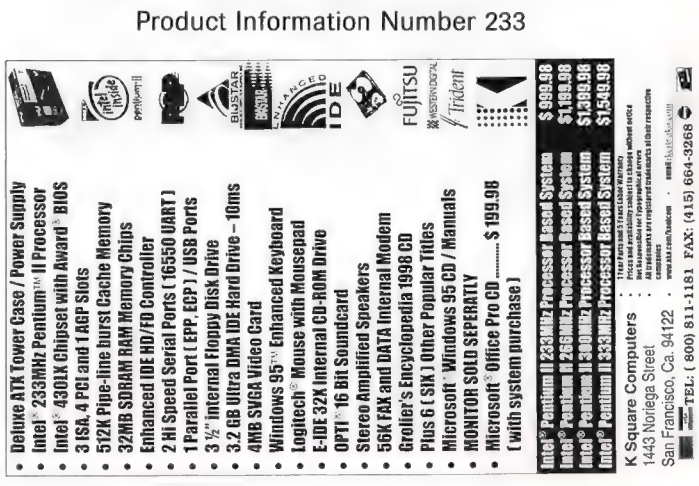
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NEXT TIME...

And so we bid farewell to April showers and prepare to welcome the merry month of May. And what a month it looks set to be, with an issue of *PC Gamer* packed with exclusives. Skeptical? Read on...

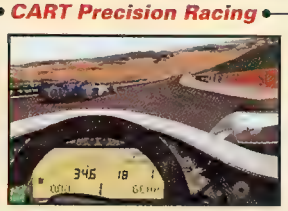
Vol. 5 No. 5 Goes On Sale April 14 Don't Miss It!

By George!

We all know that LucasArts is one of the hottest and most consistently excellent names in PC gaming, and the company is now ready to unveil its 1998 line-up in an exclusive story for *PC Gamer*. Next month, we go behind the scenes at LucasArts to bring you a first-ever look at the company's new wave of blockbuster titles, including an incredible new Star Wars game that will blow you away...

Reviews!

CART Precision Racing



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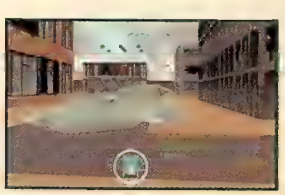

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Audit Bureau of Circulations

As the smoke from the gun swirled around her, Brook reached down and shut Ryan's eyes. "I'm sorry, baby," she whispered, "but you should know better than to try to out-shoot me." Brook kicked the gun out of Ryan's hand. "And I wasn't even here to kill you," she said. "What a fool."

Brook turned back to the case she had set on the table. Lifting out her microscope, she checked the samples she had gathered. "The Brazilian Blue-Ass Monkey is here!" she exclaimed. Suddenly, the tent flap moved and Thomas charged in. Thomas stopped as he saw Ryan dead on the ground. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat from his brow. "So, miss," he said, "I take it you're here to find the monkey?" Brook slowly nodded as she put her hand on her gun. "Now, there's no need for that, miss," Thomas said, "I always thought Ryan was a bit of a slacker, anyway." Brook threw back her head and laughed. "I'm glad we understand each other," she said.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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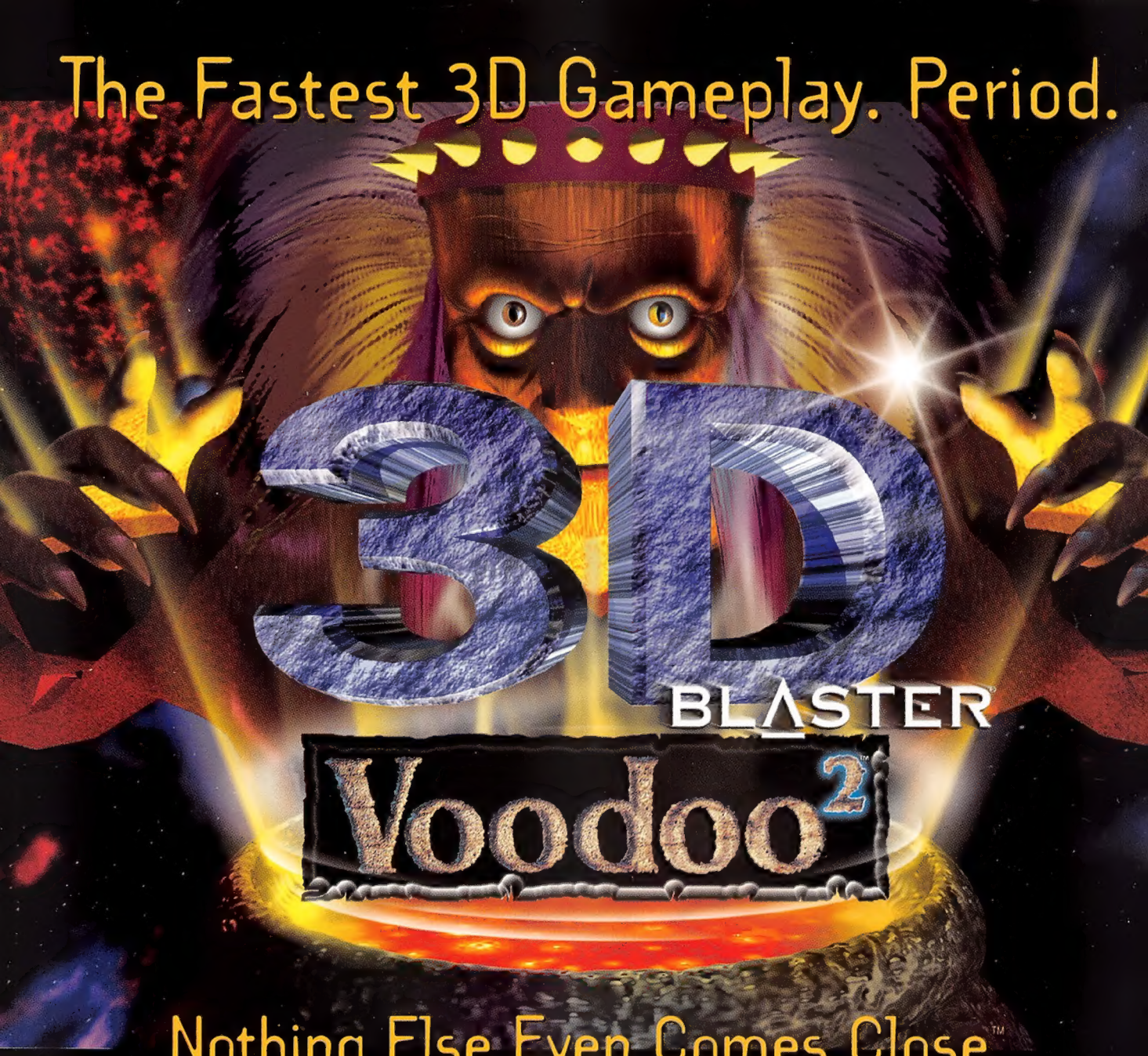

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